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Michael Keyne

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_keynem@csl.edu

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ADULT PRE-MEMBERSHIP INSTRUCTION

ADULT PRE-MEMBERSHIP INSTRUCTION

Short Title: ADULT PRE-MEMBERSHIP INSTRUCTION

Henry L. Linn
Secretary

Henry L. Linn

24484

SOME PROPOSED CRITERIA FOR AN EXAMINATION
OF ADULT PRE-MEMBERSHIP INSTRUCTION

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Michael Keyne

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Approved by:

Harry L. Coiner
Advisor

Donald L. Steffer
Reader

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San and of the Holy Spirit.¹ This is the divine call to repentance and faith, stimulated through apostles to the world, by means of the Gospel Word. As converts receive the call to the new life, they are taught to cherish all that Christ has purchased his Church.² This is stimulation of the new life through discipline, leading to Christian faith, knowledge and union. From a chronological standpoint, the Christian's new life begins with the call to faith, and continues in the growth of faith.

The bulk of Christian educational material is designed to implement the second part of the Great Commission, growth in faith and life.³ Conversion is assumed as an a priori fact. Such an assumption is generally justified, since Christian education usually serves the needs of baptized Christians who are living within the sphere of the Church. Thus an extensive body of

¹ Matt. 28:19. All Biblical references are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

² Matt. 28:20.

³ Arthur C. Sapp, Principles of Religious Teaching, Correspondence Course 224 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1947), 12-23.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Christ commissioned His Church to go and "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."¹ This is the divine call to repentance and faith, ministered through apostles to the world, by means of the dynamic Word. As converts receive the call to the new life, they are taught to observe all that Christ has commanded His Church.² This is ministration of the Word from disciple to disciple, growing in Christian faith, knowledge and works. From a chronological viewpoint, the Christian's new life begins with the call to faith, and continues in the growth of faith.

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¹Matt. 28:19. All Biblical references are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

²Matt. 28:20.

³Arthur C. Repp, Principles of Religious Teaching, Correspondence Course 271 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, n.d.), I, 19-20.

educational literature has developed which intends to guide Christians into an increasing understanding and use of the heritage which is theirs in Christ.

Adult pre-membership instruction cannot operate on the assumption that members of the class are Christians. That is, pre-membership instruction is primarily concerned with the making of disciples, and sequentially with their growth in the faith. The problem is further complicated by the fact that some learners may be lapsed Christians, others may have heterodox backgrounds and still others may be orthodox Christians.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the criteria for the structuring of adult pre-membership instruction, in the light of its unique position within the field of Christian education. The broad area of Christian education has the problem of teaching individuals who exhibit relative degrees of faith and knowledge. Functionally, most of Christian education is based upon the assumption that a common denominator of faith is present, no matter how minimal it may be. Since adult pre-membership instruction can make no such assumption, it follows that the whole philosophy of Christian education must be re-examined in the light of pre-membership instruction.

Limitation of the Problem

Adult pre-membership instruction appears to be an area of primary research. This writer has found few published materials which attempt to describe its nature and purpose. These deal

with the subject in a cursory manner. As a result, the field appears open to comprehensive investigation. This thesis is limited to an overview of some factors which relate specifically to adult pre-membership instruction.

One major area of consideration is the learner. It cannot be assumed that all learners within the pre-membership class have a common denominator of Christian faith. Nor can it be assumed that all are lacking in faith. A fairly comprehensive study of learner background is therefore in order. What do the learners have in common with each other? How do they differ in perspective and background? What are the available points of contact?

The principles which will determine the purpose and scope of adult pre-membership instruction constitute a basic consideration. Why should adult pre-membership instruction be a requirement for adult communicant membership? How does it differ from other areas of Christian education? What are its similarities? Do the general principles of Christian education apply to adult pre-membership instruction, or do new or modified principles come into effect?

The objectives of adult pre-membership instruction constitute a third major area of investigation. Various names by which this class is commonly titled are: "adult information class," "adult confirmation class," "adult membership class," "adult class" and "the pastor's class." Each of these titles may indicate a variant concept of class objectives. Is the purpose of the class to inform, to confirm, to recruit? It would appear that the distinctive objectives of the adult pre-membership class deserve

study.

A final area of major investigation is the curriculum. This is the practical application of the preceding research. How may the curriculum be developed and evaluated in the light of learner perspectives, principles and objectives?

While the above serves to define the limits of this thesis, it should be noted that each area could constitute a valid and worthwhile study in itself. An expanded consideration of the curriculum might prove to be of especially significant value. However, the lack of resource material necessitates limitation to a broad overview of the entire area.

Perhaps the chief value of the thesis to this writer is that it serves as a personal "pilot study" in the area of adult pre-membership instruction. In researching the area, this writer was compelled to come to grips with some of the basic and unique issues which are involved in adult pre-membership instruction. However, this writer is the first to admit that this study is not definitive. It attempts to clarify some of the major problems, but the conclusions which are reached are tentative, and are subject to the pragmatic test.

Establishment of Context

Adult pre-membership instruction falls within the purview of Christian education. More specifically, it is an area of adult Christian education. In common with all Christian education, it endeavors to convey God's revelation of Himself, which is embodied

in Scripture. The heart of this revelation is Jesus, the Christ. Only when the Word of God is the core of education can it be said to be truly Christian.

The prime sources of research are the Bible, which is God's inspired word, and the Lutheran Confessions, which are normative to a Lutheran understanding of the Bible. The problem involved in the use of these sources, with relation to adult pre-membership instruction, is that neither source structures this specific area. Scriptural accounts of the call to faith are invariably couched in terms of God's action upon men. Christian education normally appears to be a sequel to this action.

Adult pre-membership instruction is a human institution, which is designed to structure the channel whereby this action of the Word takes place. It is in direct conformity to Scriptural teachings, because it is essentially the proclamation of the kerygma. However, Scriptural guidelines are not specifically set forth, and the Church has the task of structuring this proclamation in a way which is in conformity to God's Word, and which conveys God's Word.

The general literature of Christian education constitutes a secondary source. However, there is a fundamental difference in the response which the broad field of Christian education expects of the learner, and that which adult pre-membership instruction expects. The difference is growth in faith compared to the call to faith. For this reason, secondary sources are illustrative, but only the primary sources are determinative in terms of content

and structure.

The basic problem which the research student in this area faces is that all of the published and accessible material is tangential to the subject, and does not focus upon it as a major field of investigation. Much of the resource material is therefore based upon experience and Church custom, neither of which can be documented. It is hoped that more studies will be made in this area, which will serve to define the purpose and content of adult pre-membership instruction more specifically.

Definition of Terms

There are two terms which deserve specific definition at this time. The first is "adult pre-membership instruction." As has been stated, there is a variety of terminology in use which describes this area of Christian education. "Adult pre-membership instruction" was chosen for use in this thesis because it is both descriptive and neutral. In terms of description, the term is apt because the class serves adults who are not yet members of the local congregation, but desire to become members. It is submitted that a relatively neutral term is desired, because much of the terminology in present use is misleading. For example, if one were to speak of an "adult confirmation class," it would be logical to assume that all of the class members had been previously baptized. And this is not necessarily the case. Similar objections can be raised to much of the other terminology in use.

The second term which needs initial definition is "Word."

This writer uses the term in the inclusive sense of describing God's total action upon mankind. In this sense, "Word" is to be equated with "Means of Grace," the "Christocentric principle," "work and will of God," the "dynamic Word," the "action of God," "God's creative, saving and sustaining action."

Methodology

The learner comes to the adult pre-membership class with a perspective which has been molded by his past life experiences. His perspective may be defined as his philosophy of life. All of the knowledge and skills to which the learner is exposed are subject to this perspective, which forms a subjective criterion for evaluation of their relevance to the learner. Adult pre-membership instruction must find a point of contact with learner perspectives. Thus, the Holy Spirit enables a new, Christocentric perspective on the part of the learner.

The Christocentric principle is normative to Lutheran theology. God's point of contact with man is His Word, which became incarnate in the person of His Son, the Savior. The Holy Spirit ministers this Word to sinful man, creating and sustaining saving faith. All Christian education is a vehicle of God's Word. Adult pre-membership instruction is subsumed under Christian education in that it is Christocentric and conveys God's Word. The primary action of the Word is conversion, followed by sanctification of life.

The objectives of adult pre-membership instruction are based

upon the Christocentric principle. The Word creates faith in the unbeliever, recalls the lapsed to faith and fortifies the faith of the believer. The meaning and purpose of the Word is communicated by human agency, but the action of the Word is wrought by the Spirit.

The curriculum of adult pre-membership instruction is the vehicle which the Spirit uses to convey God's creative, saving and sustaining Word. All aspects of the curriculum are to be subsumed under the Christocentric principle. The curriculum provides a channel whereby the Word is effected and Christian knowledge and skills are developed.

The curriculum of adult pre-membership instruction is the vehicle which the Spirit uses to convey God's creative, saving and sustaining Word. All aspects of the curriculum are to be subsumed under the Christocentric principle. The curriculum provides a channel whereby the Word is effected and Christian knowledge and skills are developed.

The aim of the learner is not a single end, upon which may be inscribed any philosophy or ethic. Rather, he already has a philosophy of life which he values because it has become a part of himself, the integrating principle by which he has learned to function in his existential existence. Any new experience, such as an adult pre-membership class, may constitute a covert threat if it demands a modification of attitudes or a part of the learner which impinge upon his intrinsic personality.²

¹ J. A. Rice, How Adults Learn (New York: Association Press, c.1930), p. 32.

² Jack R. Rice, Grace E. Rice and Lawrence E. Miller, Principles of Adult Christian Education (Washington, D.C.: National Training Laboratories, 1953), p. 34.

CHAPTER II

THE LEARNER

Perspective Factors

When one describes the individual participant in the adult pre-membership class as a "learner," it follows that the learner's cognitive and affective perspective, with relation to the subject content of the course, is in some degree deficient. At the same time, major account must be taken of the fact that each individual's perspective is relatively unique, a product of his personal background environment. This individual perspective influences each learner's reception of new information and attitudes in terms of his unique personality.¹

The mind of the learner is not a tabula rasa, upon which may be inscribed any philosophy or ethic. Rather, he already has a philosophy of life which he values because it has become a part of himself, the integrating principle by which he has learned to function in his experiential existence. Any new experience, such as an adult pre-membership class, may constitute a covert threat if it demands a modification of attitudes on the part of the learner which impinges upon his intrinsic perspective.²

¹J. R. Kidd, How Adults Learn (New York: Association Press, c.1959), p. 38.

²Jack R. Gibb, Grace N. Platts and Lorraine F. Miller, Dynamics of Participative Groups (Washington, D.C.: National Training Laboratories, c.1951), pp. 8-9.

The immediate purpose of this discussion is to establish major factors which relate to individual perspectives, and their effect upon the adult class experience. An exhaustive analysis of the individual's environmental background is not contemplated. Rather, discussion is confined to learner background as it relates specifically to the adult class.

Maturity

It is somewhat of a misnomer to refer to the learner in the pre-membership class as an "adult." In fact, the only valid uniform designation of the learner as "adult," is in contra-distinction to the junior high school confirmation class, which is usually composed of children preparing for communicant membership. Everyone else considering communicant membership is an "adult." In point of chronological age, the "adult" may be anywhere between high school and advanced age, including both extremes. His mental maturity may range between that of the sophisticate and the "rock and roller," regardless of age.³

Note must be taken of the fact that many pastors are acutely aware of the age differential within the adult class, and some have worked out relatively satisfactory solutions. Within a larger parish, it is possible to conduct several pre-membership classes, segregated according to age groups. An alternate solution would be to delay instruction until a sufficient number of

³David J. Ernsberger, A Philosophy of Adult Christian Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1959), pp. 94-100.

prospects within a certain age grouping had indicated their desire to receive instruction. Another possibility would be private instruction. It is unfortunate that all of the solutions offered demand more of the pastor's time than is sometimes available.

In the parish, the pastor often has no alternative but to conduct a single adult class at one time, with no segregation according to the age or mental maturity of the learner. As a result, there is often a disparity between learners, relative to their mental and physical maturity. For example, the teen-ager's concern with Christian family life may be only tangentially related to the concerns of the matron with three children and an agnostic husband. Yet both viewpoints are valid, and must sometimes be correlated within the adult class experience.

Religious Background

In terms of specific religious background, the learner may be a professing atheist; or, at another extreme, a member of the local congregation. However, it is virtually certain that all members of the class have at some time received some degree of previous religious contact. For many, religious instruction will have taken the form of parental training supplemented by church attendance, Sunday school, confirmation class or parish school. Some will have come into contact with religious ideals through clubs, lodges and other organizations with religious overtones. Others will have received religious instruction or exhortation in institutions such as hospitals, universities, the armed forces,

etc., which provide a sometimes socially compelling religious contact. In addition, the individual is subjected to religion via the mass media and personal contact from friends and strangers alike. It is virtually impossible to completely avoid religious contact within our society. The result is that everyone has at least a smattering of a religious vocabulary, and has formed some impression of what religion is, and has to offer.⁴ This impression will necessarily act as censor in the reception of new or competing religious concepts, as introduced within the adult class situation.

Although every member of the adult class necessarily has some degree of initial religious knowledge and experience, it cannot be inferred that a meeting ground is thereby automatically established. The learners ordinarily will not exhibit a homogeneity of religious background. Theological vocabularies may or may not manifest parallel terminology. The individual semantics which color the vocabularies will be rarely identical, sometimes parallel, and often opposing to each other. Even such a universal term as "God" is subject to a spectrum of meaning. Religious terms may have various meanings in the minds of learners. As a result, the adult class instructor does not dare to take any religious term or concept for granted. It cannot be presumed that all members of the class, having been exposed to a minimal amount of religious instruction, are ready to build upon a common semantic

⁴ Martin E. Marty, The New Shape of American Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 6.1959), p. 33.

and conceptual foundation.⁵

One segment of the adult class might be composed of persons who had previously received specific instruction within the framework of the local congregation or its denominational affiliates. The occasion of their presence within the class will vary. Sometimes the presence of a congregational official, for example, an elder, will serve as liason between the prospective members and the congregation. In some instances, a "sponsor" plan is employed, whereby a member of the congregation attends the class in company with an unchurched friend. Some, who are already communicant members of the congregation, may desire a "refresher" course in the Christian fundamentals. Lapsed members desiring re-admission will be present. All of these persons will share a relatively common religious vocabulary.

The sharing of a common vocabulary is no guarantee of a conceptual agreement.⁶ It may happen that major differences in opinion may be masked by apparent similarities of expression. Some members of the class, although communicants, may have received no formal instruction beyond confirmation class. Often these are cases of "arrested development," in terms of spiritual growth. Some will maintain the religious perspectives of child-

⁵ Warren H. Schmidt, "The Churchman and the Social Sciences," Toward Adult Christian Education, edited by Donald Deffner (River Forest: Lutheran Education Association, c.1962), XIX, 33.

⁶ Annette Lawrence and Sally Smith, "Bringing the Unconscious into the Classroom," Leader's Digest (Chicago: Adult Education Association, c.1956), III, 67-68.

hood, sometimes deteriorated into a legalistic concept of Christianity. Others may manifest an unbalanced perspective, conditioned by previous learning and environmental factors. Still others will be spiritually matured in the understanding and practice of their faith.

In the adult class, common religious vocabularies accompanied by differing semantics constitute a covert liability.⁷ Because learners may be familiar with the terminology employed, they may initially assume that they also have mastered the concepts under discussion. The result is a "mental block" of formidable proportions.⁸ Such persons may not at all consider themselves as "learners" or participants in the class. They may find it most difficult to enter into an empathic relation with the rest of the class members due to an unconscious air of cognitive superiority, fostered by a relatively greater familiarity with the terminology in use. On the other hand, when confronted by unfamiliar terms or concepts, they are unlikely to volunteer their ignorance on matters which they feel they should already know.

Another general classification of learner from the point of view of specific religious knowledge, is the person who has received religious instruction in another denomination. Obviously, this learner cannot simply erase his past religious experience and instruction. He will necessarily evaluate all new religious con-

⁷Schmidt, loc. cit.

⁸J. H. Nederhood, The Church's Mission to the Educated American (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 103.

cepts in terms of what he has already learned. If the learner feels a personal antagonism toward his past religious affiliation, he may project this attitude into an antipathy of adult class experiences and concepts which parallel his former beliefs. Thus, the former Roman Catholic may express a dislike of the liturgy, clerical collars, etc., based upon an association with his past religious experiences.

Sometimes the learner will tend to substitute other interpretations of a term for the concept which the instructor holds, based upon past denominational affiliation. It is a normal part of the learning experience for the learner to correlate new information with the knowledge he has already assimilated.⁹ If the previous knowledge is in conformity with the new information, both proceeding from a common source, such a process is highly desirable. However, this ideal may not exist when the learner has received his previous religious education in another religious denomination. In this case, the normal learning process may result in an attempt to reconcile incompatible concepts which are identified by a single linguistic label. For example, if an ex-Roman Catholic and an ex-Pentecostal hear a Lutheran definition of the term "grace," a rather lively discussion is likely to ensue. Each learner attempts to interpret new information in the light of his past experience. If his previous definition was inadequate or invalid, he must be led to discard it in favor of a correct

⁹Nathaniel Cantor, "What Is Learning?," How to Teach Adults (Chicago: Adult Education Association, c.1959), pp. 13-14.

definition. The danger is that discussion will result in a polemic rather than a Scripturally centered conformity.

Cultural Ethics

After considering the religious perspectives of learners, one must take into account the anthropocentric, as opposed to theocentric, perspectives of modern man. For these concepts are every bit as "religious" as those of organized denominations. Within academic and intellectual circles, relatively successful attempts have been made to compartmentalize the principles of human behavior. In brief example, it is possible to speak of "ethics," "principles of political science," "psycho-analytic theory," "philosophy of education," "religion," etc., sometimes as separate categories, sometimes grouped under the organizing principle of "philosophy." Such distinctions are synthetic.

"Religious" behavior, if it is the determinative principle of life, is a "religion."¹⁰ Any philosophy must be based upon a primary cause, principle or axiom. This first cause is the "god," or determinative principle from which subsequent theory and action flow. Action which is dependent upon the prime principle may be termed "worship," or "service," in that it conforms to, and is subsidiary to the service of the prime principle. Any system or philosophy of human behavior, whether organized around a concept of God, the individual, a group, idea or thing, when accepted as

¹⁰Marty, op. cit., p. 31.

the determinative principle of human behavior, becomes a religion, a faith. In effect, a philosophy, when implemented, becomes a system of religious behavior.

Many, if not most, of the secular molders of public opinion would vehemently object to the tagging of their functional philosophies with theological labels. Indeed, many would contend that the principles by which they function are entirely pragmatic, having nothing to do with any form of philosophy. The objective fact nevertheless remains, that any functional or theoretical undertaking which operates in the realm of human behavior is necessarily dealing with an area in which theology has an intrinsic stake. Religious presuppositions mold the perspectives of social scientists, artists and administrators. The very fact that modern secularists have, often successfully, attempted to isolate theology from the mainstream of contemporary life, is in itself an indication that religious issues are involved. For the active and polemic negation of the vertical dimension, with relation to human behavior and communication, is an implicit affirmation of an atheistic or agnostic "theology," which elevates man to self-determining, divine, heights. Man himself becomes "god," and any consideration of a "Wholly Other" becomes meaningless and irrelevant. This is a secular, naturalistic philosophy. Within this framework,¹¹ anthropology is not separate from, but rather wholly absorbs the form and function of theology. A "religious" concept

¹¹Donald Deffner, "Modern Adults in a Modern World," Toward Adult Christian Education, pp. 12-24.

becomes, at best, an ethic. At worst, it becomes an epistemological absurdity and anachronism.

Some writers, in analysis of modern societies, have described our time as a "post-Christian era."¹² They picture a secularized, undenominational type of universal morality. They see an unofficial national religious cult, more pervasive even than the state religion of ancient Rome.¹³ "Democracy" is the semi-divine ideal of this syncretistic religion, and its temples are the educational institutions of the land. If one attempts to find the common denominator of present day American religious life and thought, there is much to be said for such an analysis. Though one could take issue with the term, "post-Christian," if this implies that the American society was, at one time, Christian. Perhaps it would be closer to the historical facts to say that our society is, or was, religiously oriented, and, at one time, was heavily influenced by a morality which was regarded as Christian.

It could be concluded that our cultural melting pot has produced an insipid stew of common morality without the distinctive flavoring of transcendent ideals and doctrine. The stumbling block of the Gospel is an obstacle no more. Rather, it is steamrolled into a gentle incline which leads up the broad path of the American Way.¹⁴

¹² James E. Sellers, The Outsider and the Word of God (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1961), p. 21.

¹³ Marty, op. cit. p. 67.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 67-89.

The dispassionate observer might be hard pressed to distinguish between "Christian" and non-Christian behavior. James Sellers points out that the old categories of "Christian" and "pagan" no longer hold true.

The church today actually faces, in nearly every congregation and community, a new audience which is made up almost wholly of outsiders to faith. The members of this audience are strangers to the church in baffling and novel ways, and so they are not "pagans" in the usual sense of the word. Furthermore, there are two kinds of outsiders -- one who stoutly claims to be an outsider but is partly a "hidden" Christian, and another who ¹⁵claims to be a Christian but is really a "hidden" outsider.

From a strictly behavioral viewpoint, Sellers presents a rather penetrating analysis. Christian morality is widely accepted as an ideal ethic. And very often the "outsider" to the faith exhibits a way of life which is objectively more admirable than that of many Church members. The result is a pragmatically ethical parallel which is often projected into a philosophic syncretism.

Perhaps the most insidious characteristic of American religiosity is the elevation of "tolerance" as a supreme virtue. One no longer declares a person, thing or concept to be right or wrong, good or evil, in absolute terms. They are relative, shaded into the gray area of indistinguishability. There are virtuous elements in the depths of depravity. And ideals, because they are impossible of attainment, are not really worth total commitment.¹⁶ The only concept of which the American mass mind is

¹⁵Sellers, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

¹⁶Marty, op. cit., p. 68.

absolutely intolerant is absolutism itself.¹⁷

An outgrowth of our society's tolerant relativism is the acceptance of virtually any "ism," on the implicit assumption that it must have something of value to offer, though it cannot supply the final answer to the human situation. Society is therefore confronted by a host of competing anthropocentric philosophies. Often depicted as an avant garde, these philosophies present a militant stance in relation to the American culture.¹⁸ Yet they are constantly subject to the ingestive pressures of the syncretistic ethic and are eventually absorbed into the pacific body of the cultural ethic.

The adult class learner is a person who has been subjected to the inveterate pressures of cultural syncretism and anthropocentric philosophies. His reaction to religious instruction as a given body of absolute truth which proceeds from a divine Being, will be initially filtered through his own cultural, ethical censor. He may regard Christianity as a philosophic system from which he may derive ethical principles with little or no change in himself. He may regard the class experience as a wholly intellectual experience. His attitude may range anywhere up to, and including the other extreme of total repudiation of all philosophies which he has thus far encountered, an earnest seeking of a more acceptable principle of being and way of life. The learner

¹⁷Nederhood, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁸Deffner, loc. cit.

will inevitably interpret the content of religious instruction in terms of his unique religious, cultural and ethical background.

Motivation

Why is the learner present at the adult pre-membership class? Ideally, the learner, motivated by the power of the Holy Spirit, has received, or is seeking salvation by means of faith in Jesus Christ. Yet this uniquely valid motivation is not necessarily the learner's initial perceptible reason for being present. Within the scope of this discussion, it is possible to present only a limited overview of initial motives leading to participation in the adult class.

An analysis of motivation can be staged in terms of its intensity. The most obvious example is to speak of "interests" and "needs."¹⁹ An interest is the state of mind which produces the desire to know more about an object. A need is a useful or desired thing that is lacking. When a need is perceived, motivation is more intense than in the case of interest. When a need is unperceived, unconscious or covert, motivation is relatively intense, taking the form of some ego defense mechanism, which attempts to satisfy the need.²⁰ A characteristic feeling may be a suppressed anxiety reaction. In view of the fact that our era is

¹⁹ Earl F. Zeigler, Christian Education of Adults (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1958), p. 33.

²⁰ James C. Coleman, Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life (Second edition; Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, c.1956), p. 99.

often characterized as the "age of anxiety," the role of covert motivation may play a highly significant role in the understanding of learner attitudes.

From the perspective of interest, motivation toward the adult class may take a variety of forms. In the majority of cases, interest is generated through some inter-personal contact. A Christian layman may invite a friend or acquaintance. A wife may persuade her unchurched husband to attend. Sunday school children may stimulate their parents to participation. The pastor will have regular opportunities for contact. The noteworthy common denominator is that prime interest is initially directed, not as much toward the class experience, but more toward the person who brings the learner to the class.

The subjective recognition of personal need will vary according to the perception of the individual learner. However sociological studies indicate that the modern American is primarily motivated by the desire to conform to his group or society.²¹

In The Lonely Crowd, a modern classic study of the American character, Riesman maintains that the "other-directed person" is the product of our society. The other-directed person responds to his total social environment and endeavors to conform to its demands. He is mobile, facile, adaptable in the extreme. He does not wish for distinction, but is content with the approval of his peers. "One prime psychological lever of the other-directed

²¹Ernsberger, op. cit., p. 70.

person is a diffuse anxiety."²²

If Riesman's analysis applies to learners within the adult class, it would appear that many individuals are motivated by the desire to utilize the Church for self-willed ends. Many are apparently interested in the Church because it is an established social agency. In their urge to conform, individuals seek Church membership. Within the Church, they expect to find a ready-made peer group with which they may identify.

William H. Whyte tends to confirm the thesis that many Americans, when choosing a denominational affiliation, are consciously more concerned with human relations and conformity, than with a theocentric faith. He describes several suburban case studies, in which the consensus of community opinion seemed to be that the Church, if it is to be relevant to human needs, must concern itself primarily with the social and communal aspect of human existence, with minimum reference to divisive doctrines.²³ It would appear that many prospective Church members are primarily concerned with the social impact a congregation has upon the local community. There is apparently a minimal regard for the objective veracity of theological doctrine, small concern for the impingement of God upon human society.²⁴

²²David Riesman, Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denny, The Lonely Crowd (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., c.1950), p. 42.

²³William H. Whyte, Jr., The Organization Man (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., c.1956), pp. 405-422.

²⁴Theodore O. Wedel, The Christianity of Main Street (New York: The MacMillan Company, c.1952), pp. 5-7.

While sociological studies tend to indicate that the modern American is other-directed in outlook they also postulate that the goal of this other-directedness is essentially self-willed, and that social relationships are means to an end, rather than an end in themselves.

Obligated to conciliate or manipulate a variety of people, the other-directed person handles all men as customers who are always right; but he must do this with the realization that, as Everett Hughes has put it, some are more right than others. This diversity of roles to be taken with a diversity of customers is not institutionalized or clear-cut, and the other-directed person tends to become merely his succession of roles and encounters and hence to doubt who he is and where he is going.²⁵

The picture emerges of a person whose life is a succession of manipulative, other-directed roles. He is an actor; such an accomplished actor, that he has lost his sense of identity. One of the most stark depictions of man's search for identity comes from the pen of J. D. Salinger. A recurring theme in his Catcher in the Rye is the essential "phoniness" of persons.

"Even the couple of nice teachers on the faculty, they were phonies, too," I said. "there was this one old guy, Mr. Spencer. His wife was always giving you hot chocolate and all that stuff, and they were really pretty nice. But you should've seen him when the headmaster, old Thurmer, came in the history class and sat down in the back of the room for about half an hour. He was supposed to be incognito or something. After a while, he'd be sitting back there and then he'd start interrupting what old Spencer was saying to crack a lot of corny jokes. Old Spencer'd practically kill himself chuckling and smiling and all, like as if Thurmer was a goddam prince or something."²⁶

²⁵ Riesman, Glazer and Denny, op. cit., p. 165.

²⁶ J. D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye (New York: The New American Library, c.1951), p. 126.

One of the prevailing themes of modern literature is the scraping away of the histrionic, manipulative, other-directed veneer, and the exposure of the essential, nameless, faceless and formless man. The question the novelist poses for the existential man is, "Who am I?" Some, with real discernment, bluntly epitomize the dilemma of the mass man. In Death of a Salesman, Biff, pondering the untimely death of his father, muses, "He never knew who he was."²⁷ The need to find an answer is the fundamental motivating drive of the modern American.

It appears highly significant that some analysts of the modern American intellectual scene, in summing up the varieties of extant philosophies, are able to group divergent perspectives under a single concept, "the philosophy of the I."²⁸ It may well be that the intellectual, agonizing over the question of identity, postulating anthropocentric philosophies upon his conclusions, is articulating the profound and fundamental concern of the mass man. Perhaps the only real gap between the intellectual and the non-intellectual, the bourgeois, is a relative honesty. The intellectual faces the question of existence squarely, asks, "Who am I?" The Christian finds the answer in another question, "Whose am I?"

It must be granted that the intellectual does not occupy a median position in society. He does not appear to be truly rep-

²⁷ Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman (New York: Viking Press, c.1949), p. 138.

²⁸ Deffner, op. cit., p. 23.

representative of the thought and concerns of society as a whole. But perhaps the disparity is only superficial. What of the other-directed, manipulative and manipulated mass man? Perhaps he, too, has the same basic need to find himself, to solve the enigma of identity. But unwilling or unable to face the stark reality of existential existence, he sublimates his basic need satisfaction into the other-directed channels and mode of existence so vividly described by sociologists. Sherrill sums up his condition:

Again, the existing self may not be able to attain liberation. For whatever reason, he finds himself dominated. The domination may be exerted by other persons, or by institutions, or by vast impersonal forces outside himself, against which he feels himself powerless. He feels himself being manipulated and resents it, resents the persons or forces that manipulate him, and resents himself for allowing himself to be manipulated; and yet can find no way to break out from under the domination. He then may find that he must hide the resentment and "play the game" for stakes which, if he wins them, only bind²⁹ him more securely in the bondage which he inwardly loathes.

The portrait emerges of an individual who apparently functions by an unholy perversion of the divine command, "Take no thought for the morrow."³⁰ On the surface, he is complacent, unthinking, and unanalytic. He appears to have no introspective or affective depth. He seems an intellectual blob of protoplasm; adjusting, always adjusting, but never assuming a fixed form. But underneath this complacent exterior, sometimes sublimated to unreachable and covert depths, seethes the anxiety ridden, lonely, existential

²⁹ Lewis J. Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: The MacMillan Company, c.1955), p. 30.

³⁰ Matt. 6:34.

self. "Who, what, why am I?" he asks. Not finding an answer, he throws himself into the frustrating, meaningless stream of the other-directed life. He seeks goals, a purpose in life, but finds that life is only a mirror. And his god becomes the reflected image of himself.

Luther had a phrase for it, curvatus in se -- curved in upon one's self. . . . You can say it in a word. Man in his basic orientation is anthropocentric, not theocentric. In his whole life and goal he is centered in man -- himself, not God.³¹

Group Perspective

Up to this point, learner perspectives have been discussed from a primarily individual viewpoint. It has been shown that each learner brings to the adult class a relatively unique outlook, conditioned by previous experience. At the same time, all of the learners share certain fundamental needs, though subjective recognition of these needs varies from learner to learner. But what happens when these individuals are brought together?

Perhaps the most characteristic expression of the group is an interpersonal relativism. Individuals adjust to each other, and will, perhaps unconsciously, seek a pattern of behavior which will conform to the group norm. Very few people enjoy being classified as "oddballs." Each member of the group will put forth tentative "feelers," as he attempts to assume a role which will be compatible with the group expression. Essentially, this is a

³¹Deffner, op. cit., p. 23.

manifestation of the other-directed characteristic. The learner is entering into a new environment, and he wants to know the unwritten, and often unstated, rules of behavior as soon as possible. Initially, he is relatively eager to hear others express themselves. And he is often most reluctant to engage in discussion until he has decided upon the role he will play within the group situation. He wants to know the background, attitudes and knowledge of the other learners. He especially wants to know what is expected of him by the leader, and the role which the leader will be playing; whether autocratic, paternalistic, permissive or participative.³²

A result of individual role adjustments is the eventual formation of a unique group perspective. This perspective is conditioned by the relative dominance of individual perspectives, and is not necessarily an accurate reflection of a median group perspective. As one example, an instructor may assume an autocratic role which subordinates learner opinion and effectively precludes an adequate expression of group interaction. Some learners will gratefully accept a subordinate role. Others, depending upon personality differences, may violently react to the "muzzling" of their opinions, and may assume subversive roles as they attempt to share in the molding of the group perspective.³³

A perspective filters the reception of new information and attitudes. In effect, the point of view modifies and conditions

³²Gibb, Platts and Miller, op. cit., pp. 16-21.

³³Ibid. p. 5.

the whole learning process. A basic problem within the adult class, is that the emerged group perspective may not be adequately representative of the perspectives of all of the individuals who make up the group. A symptomatic example would be the individual who is relatively silent during the meeting. After the group has disbanded, he may get into lengthy discussion with the instructor or another member of the class. A group perspective, if it is to be conducive to the learning process, must be broad enough to include all individual perspectives, allowing an uninhibited intercommunication.³⁴

It is within the realm of possibility that a group or series of groups may exhibit a remarkable degree of initial perspective homogeneity. This may be an indication that something is wrong. For example, the instructor may be preventing the emergence of a group dynamic by his dominance of the group and the imposition of his personal perspective upon the group. On the other hand, the group may exhibit a genuine unanimity of background and perspective. In this case, it is possible that the instructor has allowed his perspective to censor the recruitment of persons for the class. In effect, he is thereby fostering a "class" or "status" congregation, actively encouraging to membership only "the right sort" of persons. Needless to say, such a procedure, whether conscious or not, is deadly. Yet studies indicate that such happenings are not uncommon. When the instructor finds that he has no stimulus for the adaptation of his presentation and

³⁴ Ibid., p. 5. *The Human Element* (New York: Pocket Books Inc., 1957), pp. 170-181.

material from one class to another, he would do well to consider the implications behind an apparently uniform group perspective.³⁵

Adult classes should necessarily differ from each other in their initially emergent group perspectives. Each class has a uniqueness and flavor all its own, because each class is composed of a different set of individuals than the last one. This is one factor which makes the adult pre-membership class an enjoyable experience for the instructor. For each class faces him with a slightly, sometimes radically, different point of view. Teaching need never grow dull or stereotyped if the instructor is sensitive to group and individual perspectives.

Point of Contact

Learners within the adult pre-membership class will normally exhibit wide variations in maturity, religious, cultural and ethical background, individual and group perspective. An initial task of the instructor is to somehow relate the kerygma to these widely disparate perspectives in such a manner that it becomes relevant and meaningful to the individual learner. The instructor must find a point of contact with the learner which violates and distorts neither the integrity of the individual nor of the Gospel. This point of contact is the opening wedge which creates an objectively valid, subjectively perceived need. This need is satisfied within the class experience by means of the learning process.

³⁵ Vance Packard, The Status Seekers (New York: Pocket Books Inc., c.1959), pp. 170-181.

James Sellers, in his book, The Outsider and the Word of God, attempts to establish and isolate a single point of contact. Sellers' recurring theme is that the point of contact is also the point of conflict between the outsider and the Word of God. In illustration, he shows that second century apologetics, as exemplified by Tertullian and Justin, often employed the form and symbols of pagan thought, but was unable to effect a total rapprochement, because the essential characteristics of Christian and pagan thought diverge at the kerygma.³⁶

In summation of recent theories relating to a point of contact, Sellers declares that Karl Barth refuses to admit the validity of a "point of connection," that the simple proclamation of the divine message is all that is needed or required.³⁷ According to Sellers, Brunner feels that God's Word creates man's ability to believe, and hence, the search for a point of contact is valid and necessary.³⁸ Tillich looks to the existential human situation, and postulates that the very fact that an apologetic can be formulated indicates that there is a point of contact between the outsider and God.³⁹ Tillich locates the point of contact in man's sin itself, thereby establishing Sellers' contention that the point of contact is also the point of conflict be-

³⁶Sellers, op. cit., pp. 60-86.

³⁷Ibid., p. 42.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 38-39.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 50-51.

tween God and natural man.⁴⁰ Throughout the remainder of his book, Sellers amplifies his theme, concluding that the point of contact, which is the point of conflict, is to be conveyed in terms relevant to the outsider. That is, worn-out and orthodox symbols of religion are to be discarded because their meaning is ambiguous to the outsider. Instead, the biblical meaning should be conveyed in fresh symbols drawn from the life of the outsider.⁴¹

Sellers demonstrates a laudable grasp of the problem relating to the establishment of a point of contact. But his solution is unacceptable in that it divests biblical symbolism from the proclamation of the kerygma. The Christian communicator who follows such a methodology may enunciate a proclamation which parallels the kerygma. But there is no guarantee that it will be the kerygma. Biblical meaning is inseparably linked with biblical symbolism. Any attempt to supplant one in favor of the other, no matter how well intentioned, inevitably opens the door to ultimate heresy, reconstitution of the kerygma by anthropocentric standards. The point could be raised that if Sellers had said that secular symbol should be used to illustrate biblical symbolism and meaning, to re-invest biblical symbolism with its objectively valid meaning, he might have presented an insight into the point of contact problem which meets the criteria of Scrip-

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 226.

ture.⁴²

Perhaps Sellers suggests a more salient approach when he says: "The anxiety of the modern man is obviously a promising point of contact to which the religious proclaimer may speak."⁴³ Unfortunately, he pursues this theme from a strictly anthropocentric viewpoint, and does not attempt to deal with the relation of guilt to anxiety, the theological dimension to the problem.⁴⁴

The behavioral sciences give evidence that anxiety is a diffuse, perhaps dominant element in the existential human situation. If there is one common denominator to human experience, it is this feeling of anxiety.⁴⁵

Psychologists define anxiety as "A state of emotional tension characterized by apprehension and fearfulness."⁴⁶ A dictionary gives as definition of the term: "Painful uneasiness of mind over an impending or anticipated ill."⁴⁷ Guilt is a "special subcase of anxiety in psychological terminology."⁴⁸ The

⁴²2 Peter 1:20-21.

⁴³Sellers, op. cit., p. 146.

⁴⁴Ibid, pp. 147-179.

⁴⁵Paul Meehl, "The Molding and Activating of Behavior," What, Then, Is Man? (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1958), p. 122.

⁴⁶Coleman, op. cit., p. 641.

⁴⁷Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., c.1951), p. 40.

⁴⁸Paul Meehl, "Valid and Displaced Guilt, and Their Relation to Psychological Health and Spiritual Condition," What, Then, Is Man?, p. 217.

psychologist deals only minimally, if at all, with an objective guilt. A derivative definition would suggest that anxiety is an apprehensive tension, caused by subjective uncertainty with regard to the outcome of an issue. Guilt feeling, the condition with which psychology is concerned, is to be radically distinguished from the theological concept of guilt, in that guilt feeling is a subjective anxiety manifestation, whereas the theological concept of guilt refers to a divinely objective state of being.⁴⁹

Psychologists operate on the theory that anxiety is normally combatted by a variety of ego defenses, dependent upon the personality of the individual.⁵⁰ Specific guilt feelings are met by the mental mechanism of displacement, the "transfer of an emotional attitude or symbolic meaning from one object or concept to another,"⁵¹ a substitution of goals and needs.

It is submitted that the other-directed mass man suffers from a fundamental guilt feeling, which is to be equated with the Christian concept of "conscience," the covert, universal reminder of the "image of God," which was renounced in Eden and can be restored only in Christ. The other-directed person, unable to appease this subjective, perhaps unconscious, often perverted guilt feeling, utilizes the ego defense of displacement, sub-

⁴⁹Coleman, op. cit., p. 223.

⁵⁰Sophie Sloman, "Psychodynamics and Psychopathology," What, Then, Is Man?, pp. 142-145.

⁵¹Coleman, op. cit., p. 644.

stitutes subsidiary need satisfactions as his life goals. The result is an anxiety dominated existence, which cannot be relieved because the individual is unable or unwilling to recognize his fundamental need. Satisfaction of the guilt feeling is the fundamental need. And this can ultimately and validly be satisfied only by the subjective recognition of the individual's objective guilt before God, and the impingement of the kerygma upon the human dilemma.

In terms of "point of contact," it can be said that any interest or subjectively felt need can serve as a point of contact. The point of contact is a wedge to drive in upon the essential need of man, which is an objective valuation of self in terms of a biblically centered image of man. This modus operandi utilizes the insights of the behavioral sciences and intellectual anthropocentric perspectives, but links covert guilt feeling with an objectively valid guilt before God, and makes subjectively perceptible the need of the kerygma.

Fundamentally, the point of contact is not so much a concept as it is an action. The purpose of this action is the exposure of anxiety as a symptom. The root cause of this symptom is guilt before God. The purpose and thrust of the point of contact is not to heighten or "cure" the anxiety symptom, but to reveal its symptomatic nature.

Summary

People who enroll in the adult pre-membership class are

motivated by a complex of factors which will influence the learning process. To say that "no two people are alike," is an obvious truism. But the degree of dissimilarity between persons needs to be understood if adult pre-membership instruction is to be effective. Learners will differ in their relative maturity, education, cultural level, religious and ethical standards. Every learner has a unique perspective, with his own personality and philosophy of life. While he may endeavor to conform to a group norm, he remains basically an individual, with his own motivations and goals.

The only motivation for attending the class which is valid before God, is the desire to become a forgiven child of God. All other motivations are symptomatic, in that they endeavor to satisfy felt needs, which are the result of sin. Adult pre-membership instruction exposes the symptomatic nature of learner motivation, and directs the learner to his need before God, the forgiveness of sin.

If adult pre-membership instruction is to be effective, some initial point of contact must be found, so that the Word may take effect. This point of contact provides a channel through which the Word pierces the barriers raised by individual perspectives, which have been molded and influenced by man's sinful nature.

Because individual perspectives vary, no part of adult pre-membership instruction can be taken for granted. Each learner interprets new knowledge in the light of his own perspective. A task of the instructor is to convey the clear and complete

kerygma through the learner's perspective as an undistorted proclamation of forgiveness in Christ.

PRINCIPLES

Definition and Derivation of Principles

The Lutheran Church normally requires pre-membership instruction as a prerequisite to communicant membership. The nature and content of this instruction will vary with the circumstances of each nation and congregation. But a minimum amount of instruction, which includes the distinctive teachings of the Lutheran Church, as recorded in Scripture, is a universal requirement.¹ In contrast to much of modern adult educational and group dynamics theory,² the content of this instruction is determined, not by the class, but by the Church, through its representative, the pastor. The rationale of this decision is that one must place experience in perspective for the primary use of these services who are incapable of determining the full extent of their subjective needs before God, and cannot determine the content which will satisfy these needs.³

Adult pre-membership instruction proceeds from a distinctively Lutheran perspective and functions upon the basis of res-

¹ John H. E. Fritz, Systematic Theology (Revised edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 289.

² David J. Ernster, A Philosophy of Adult Christian Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1958), pp. 135-151.

³ 1 Cor. 14:4.

CHAPTER III

PRINCIPLES

Definition and Derivation of Principles

The Lutheran Church normally requires pre-membership instruction as a prerequisite to communicant membership. The amount and direction of this instruction will vary with the circumstances of local pastors and congregations. But a minimum amount of instruction, which involves the distinctive teachings of the Lutheran Church, as recorded in Scripture, is a universal requirement.¹ In contrast to much of modern adult educational and group dynamics theory,² the content of this instruction is determined, not by the class, but by the Church, through its representative, the pastor. The rationale of this decision is that the adult class experience is provided for the primary use of those persons who are incapable of determining the full extent of their objective needs before God, and cannot determine the content which will satisfy these needs.³

Adult pre-membership instruction proceeds from a distinctively Lutheran perspective and functions upon the basis of cer-

¹John H. C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (Revised edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), p. 289.

²David J. Ernsberger, A Philosophy of Adult Christian Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1959), pp. 139-141.

³1 Cor. 2:14.

tain definite principles. These principles are divinely revealed in Holy Scripture and formulated in the Lutheran Confessions. They constitute the norm for Lutheran faith and life, and all theological doctrine is to be evaluated in the sole light of these principles. It follows that a statement of principles is prerequisite to an understanding of the function of the pre-membership class.

This chapter will endeavor to state those principles which constitute a justification for Lutheran adult pre-membership instruction, and which reveal the distinctive character of Lutheran theology as an accurate reflection of divine revelation. An exhaustive dogmatic is not contemplated. This discussion will instead be confined to those principles which are directly relevant to pre-membership instruction, and constitute an educational standard. As a statement of principles, this chapter is thetic in style. Documentation relating to the more comprehensive theological and educational principles is taken from both primary and secondary sources. However, heavy reliance is placed upon secondary references, as they focus upon the principles which relate to Christian education. Principles which relate directly to the unique aspects of adult pre-membership instruction are derived in part from published primary and secondary sources, as well as from observation of the common practice of adult pre-membership instruction within the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod. The emergent principles are fundamental to the rationale of this thesis, yet should be considered to be subject to further clari-

fication and amplification in the light of continuing research.

Functionally, adult pre-membership instruction is an educative process. The antecedent principles of this process are derived from Holy Scripture and formulated in the Lutheran Confessions. Thus the formal principle, the source of doctrine of Lutheran theology is sola Scriptura.⁴ Lutherans entertain a holistic view of Scripture, wherein all theology is seen to converge in the material principle, justification by faith.

In Lutheran theology the believer does not accept the absolute authority of the Scriptures as an a priori truth, but because he has learned to know Christ as his divine Savior; has experienced the power of His Word in the Scriptures upon his heart; and relies implicitly on Christ's own statement concerning the divine character of the Scriptures.⁵

Lutheran theology posits a soteriological perspective as normative to a Christian world view. It is neither theocentric nor anthropocentric. It is Christocentric. That is, all theological thinking must begin, center and culminate in Christ.⁶ This does not imply that the doctrine of Christ is lifted out of the context of theological dogma and arbitrarily placed in a normative position. Rather, the work of Christ, justification by faith, is seen as the central purpose and intent of God's dealings with mankind. The single valid point of contact between a holy God and an estranged mankind is the Cross.⁷

⁴F. E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America (Second edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956), p. 142.

⁵Ibid., p. 144.

⁶Ibid., p. 145.

⁷Ibid., p. 142.

The Nature of God

It is remarkable that the Lutheran Confessions, an exhaustive apologetic of Evangelical belief, nowhere attempt the seemingly indispensable task of defining the essential nature of God. It cannot be said that this lack of definition was an oversight, or that a statement on the essence of God was unnecessary because there was universal agreement on this doctrine. To the contrary, the Evangelicals were reacting to a Scholastic system which endeavored to explicitly define God, to label and compartmentalize the Infinite.⁸

Lutherans believe that God reveals Himself in an active and personal relationship to mankind. The essence of God cannot be defined apart from His work and will, as manifested in the divine impingement upon humanity. The belief that divine action is an integral part of divine essence eliminates any possibility of a deus absconditus or a divine abstraction. God is real, and Christians know He is real because His actions are real and conclusive.⁹

Lutheran theologians hold that God's condemnatory action is revealed in His Law, which demands perfect obedience, without providing the means of man's rendering it. God stands revealed as the perfectly just Judge who condemns man to the results of his own imperfection; sin, death and hell. But the ultimate pur-

⁸ Ibid., p. 146.

⁹ Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), I, 454.

pose of God's Law is not condemnation. It exists to bring man to an awareness of his guilt before God, which is most fully revealed in Scripture.¹⁰

God's gracious action toward man is revealed in the person and work of Christ, the effectual Savior from the condemnation of the Law. The Gospel is God's enduring promise that the Christian is justified by faith in Christ before the divine Judge. Scripture reveals that God is not only a condemning Judge, but also a loving Father, seeking to reconcile His creation to Himself. He does not stand apart, but enters into the world, creates the means of reconciliation between Himself and fallen man, implants faith, and sustains the Christian in his renewed communion.¹¹

Lutherans find it impossible to define the nature of God apart from His work and will toward man. It is understandable, then, that the Apostles' Creed provides a theological framework congenial to Evangelical thought. Luther, in his Large Catechism, sums up the doctrine of the Trinity as stated in the Creed:

Although the whole world has sought painstakingly to learn what God is and what he thinks and does, yet it has never succeeded in the least. But here you have everything in richest measure. In these three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart, his sheer, unutterable love. He created us for this very purpose, to redeem and sanctify us. Moreover, having bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. As we explained before, we could never come to recognize the Father's favor and grace were it

¹⁰ Mayer, loc. cit.

¹¹ Ibid.

not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible Judge. But neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit.¹²

It is significant that Lutheran theology, in treatment of the doctrine of creation, ascribes an immediate connection between the Creator and His existent creation. "I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul. . . ."¹³ A determinist view, which would see God as acting in a historic creation, and only occasionally thereafter, is utterly foreign to Lutheran thought. To the contrary, the Christian says, "Just as God has created the heavens and the earth, so also He has created me." The individual is not only responsible to God via the Adamic race, but owes his personal existence to the personal God.

The Nature of Man

The nature of man can be comprehensively understood only in relation to God. For he is a created being and owes his total self, body and soul, to God. God created man, male and female, and provided the marital state as a complementary and sustaining relationship. All creation, creatures and social institutions

¹² "The Large Catechism," The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer and Arthur C. Piepkorn (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959), p. 419. Hereafter the Book of Concord will be referred to as BC.

¹³ BC, "The Small Catechism," p. 345.

have been given to man and are subject to his utilization under God. All of the gifts which God has given to man are predicated upon the reason for his existence. Created in the image of God, man is the crown of creation and is divinely intended to live in communion with his Creator.¹⁴

Man's original and essential sin is the assertion of a false autonomy¹⁵ which severs man from God, perverts from its divinely intended use everything man touches, and results in his damnation. Man has lost his original righteousness, the image of God. He is born in a state of total alienation from God, and is incapable of re-establishing divine communion.

Lutheran theology, as a reflection of Scriptural teaching, presents an objectively valid picture of man's depravity. It denies every claim which would attempt to ascribe any capacity on man's part to transcend his sinful self. In illustration, man can and does perform actions which he considers to be "righteous" or "good." Charitable works, heroic action, civic service, etc., are universally considered to be "good works." But this is the "righteousness of reason," and is to be radically distinguished from the righteousness of faith.¹⁶ The crux of the matter is that when man considers an act to be "good," he is thereby constituting himself as judge of what is good and evil. This is the

¹⁴ Rom. 8:17.

¹⁵ Gen. 3:5-7.

¹⁶ BC, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," p. 110.

original and persistent sin of autonomy.

Insofar as man performs acts which are based upon the righteousness of reason, and are in conformity with God's will, they may indeed be "good" and even materially rewarded by God. But the righteousness of reason cannot merit the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, because it is only incidentally concurrent to God's will, and does not stem from faith in Christ.¹⁷

Mayer states that the most deplorable thing about man's sinful state is that his reason and intuition are unable to give him a valid picture of his sinful condition and the wrath of God.¹⁸ Only to a relative degree can he sense his need, and his alienation from God has shut off the possibility of his satisfying that need. This alienation from God is not merely a passive state of being. It cannot be said that man is the helpless battleground in the war between God and Satan. He is wholeheartedly on the side of evil. He has not only divorced himself from God's will, but he has taken up arms against God. He has constituted himself a god, and refuses to recognize any power superior to himself.¹⁹

If the purpose of divine revelation were only to tell man that he once had everything and now has nothing, there might be little reason for religious instruction. But the objective picture of his hopeless condition is only the prelude to the news

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Mayer, op. cit., p. 150.

¹⁹ 1 Cor. 2:14.

that the merciful and gracious God has provided the means of man's salvation, renewal and re-integration into the divine communion in the person and work of Christ. By His Word, God turns ego-centric futility into the triumphant certainty of a Christocentric fulfillment.²⁰

The Nature of the Word

Insofar as it has been revealed to man, the essence of God's work and will is that He vitally and determinatively involves Himself in the affairs of men and His creation. This creative, saving and sustaining action is termed the "Word of God." Dr. Franzmann reflects the Scriptural concept of "Word" when he states:

This "living and active" word (Heb. 4:12) is therefore a force in history; it "speeds on" in the world and "triumphs" there (2 Thess. 3:1), in time and place and among men; it is enmeshed in events, tied up with the world, and it involves people. The word of God is God in action; for God is not a lecturer but the God who is "working still," as Jesus said of His Father, and of Himself the Son (John 5:17).²¹

It is vital to Lutheran theology that God's Word is not limited to the designation of a material substance, the result of His past action in history. The Lutheran Confessions subscribe to the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and unequivocally state that the Bible is the Word of God. And it is upon this written Word that Lutheran theology is based, and to which all Lutheran doctrine must conform.²²

²⁰Eph. 2:1-10.

²¹Martin H. Franzmann, The Word of the Lord Grows (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1961), p. 1.

²²BC, "Smalcald Articles," p. 295.

The Confessions most emphatically declare that God's action did not cease with the inspiration of His Scriptures and the institution of His Sacraments. He continues His creative, saving and sustaining action upon mankind. This action, as a dynamic and substance, is termed the "Word of God."²³

"It is in the spirit of the Lutheran Confessions to speak of the means of Grace as the threefold Word, the written, the spoken, and the signed (visible) Word."²⁴ The written Word is the Bible. The spoken Word is the privately and publicly proclaimed proclamation of God's action of salvation. The signed Word is the Word made visible in the form of the divinely instituted Sacraments.²⁵ It cannot be said that there are three "Words," but that His Word acts by three means, proceeding from a common source and achieving a common end.

God's action, His will and work, can be understood only within the context of the incarnate Christ. Lutheran theology will interchange "Gospel," "Word," "Word and Sacraments."²⁶ Each of these terms is seen by the Confessions to refer to the central action of God, justification by faith.

The essential character of God's Word is that it is the Spirit's implementation of the Father's will as personified and

²³BC, "Formula of Concord," p. 530.

²⁴Mayer, op. cit., p. 161.

²⁵Herman A. Preus, "The Written, Spoken, and Signed Word," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXVI (September, 1955), 641.

²⁶Mayer, loc. cit.

carried out in the person and work of Jesus, the Christ. This Word effectually creates and sustains faith in the heart of the believer, converts him to a God-willed existence and community, and produces in him the fruits of faith. The soteriological significance of the Word is set forth in the Gospel of John,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.²⁷

John continues,

To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.²⁸

The Nature of the Church

In simplest essence, the holy, Christian Church is the living vehicle and result of the dynamic Word of God. That is, it is the divinely called, gathered, enlightened and sanctified communion of saints in Christ Jesus.²⁹ By reason of God's indwelling, it is holy, perfect and eternal.³⁰ Though invisible to human eyes,

²⁷ John 1:1-4.

²⁸ John 1:12-14.

²⁹ BC, "The Small Catechism," p. 345.

³⁰ Mayer, op. cit., p. 174.

it is as real and substantial as God Himself.³¹ This is because God has endowed it with His presence, power and promise.³²

In contra-distinction to all humanly instituted organizations and societies, the Church is a living organism.³³ Christians are not self-willed individuals who unite themselves in the interest of a relatively common good. They are rather the called people of God. Christ says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you."³⁴ They are the human clay,³⁵ molded by God's creative Word into the organic body of Christ,³⁶ inspired with the Spirit of life.³⁷ The Church was not humanly organized, but divinely created. The relation of Church members, one to another, is organic and familial. The integrity of the Church centers in Christ and has its expression in the corporate life.

When God calls, He calls to a new existence and creation. And in God's economy, the call to a new being is the call to a new living. St. James expresses the essence of the new life when he declares that "faith without works is dead."³⁸ Concept and ac-

³¹BC, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," p. 171.

³²Acts 1:8.

³³BC, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," p. 168.

³⁴John 15:16.

³⁵Is. 64:8.

³⁶Col. 1:16-19.

³⁷Rom. 8:2.

³⁸James 2:17.

tion are inseparable. In this sense, the Church is the vehicle of God's Word. It contains and administers the work and will of God, as expressed in His creative, saving and sustaining action toward mankind. The nature of the Church is intrinsic to the nature of God and His Word. As God acts, so His chosen people act to "do the will of the Father."³⁹

The Church is governed only by the Word,⁴⁰ sustained in the Word,⁴¹ and proclaims only the Word.⁴² From its essence derives the function of the Church, which is ministration of the Word. The Holy Spirit, by the Means of Grace, ministers the Word of love, reconciliation and forgiveness to God's people. Moved by the power of the Spirit, Christians minister this same Word to each other in mutual edification, spiritual and physical support. Through prayer, praise and thanksgiving the Church returns to God the effect of His Word.⁴³ Motivated by divinely infused love, the Church proclaims the Word of Christ to the world and joyfully accepts the Spirit's integration of converts into its body by means of Holy Baptism or profession of faith.

The result of God's dynamic Word is the Church. In consequence, the Church is perfect and entire, wanting nothing. It is

³⁹ Matt. 7:21.

⁴⁰ BC, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," p. 283.

⁴¹ BC, "The Large Catechism," p. 360.

⁴² BC, "The Smalcald Articles," p. 310.

⁴³ Is. 55:11-12.

composed of saints, and is holy.⁴⁴ And yet, at the same time, the Church Militant has not yet attained, but lives in the certain hope of an eschatological fulfillment. It both is, and is becoming what God wills it to be.⁴⁵ Living in expectation the temporal Church needs the constant exhortation to remember what it is. The Church in the world is at war with the powers of the world.⁴⁶ Confronted by heresy, infiltration and desertion, the Church Militant lives in constant need of the sustaining and purifying power of the Word.⁴⁷

To sustain and encourage His chosen people in their ministration of the Word, God has given to His Church the office of the public ministry.⁴⁸ Called to the ministry of spiritual oversight, the Christian pastor administers the Means of Grace to the ministers of the Word.⁴⁹ The Church is constituted a royal priesthood of believers, entrusted with the ministration of the Word of forgiveness and reconciliation in Christ.⁵⁰ Within the context of the royal priesthood, pastors see to the spiritual oversight of

⁴⁴Mayer, op. cit., p. 175.

⁴⁵Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "The Doctrine of the Church," The Abiding Word (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1960), III, 300.

⁴⁶¹ Pet. 5:8-9.

⁴⁷Eph. 6:10-11.

⁴⁸Eph. 4:11.

⁴⁹¹ Pet. 5:2-3.

⁵⁰¹ Pet. 2:9.

⁵¹LC, "The Small Catechism," p. 345.

the Church, and every Christian receives and administers the Word in faith and life. Ministration of the Word is directed from, to and through the Church, and is the privileged responsibility of every Christian.

The Nature of the Christian

A Christian is a person for whom the essence of existence has become the Word of God. He accepts God's action upon his life as the determinative principle by which he functions. That is, God not only acts for and upon him, but in and through him.

The Christian believes that he is a created being, responsible to God. He knows that his responsibility takes the form of response to God's creative Word. All that he has and is, he returns to God to use in His good pleasure. He regards dedication to God, not as the levying of a divine fine which frees him to use what is left for his own purposes, but recognizes the purpose of all creation as being the implementation of God's Word. He sees himself as an instrument of God, and the universe as a trust from God. Luther sums up the Christian's concept of creation,

I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul, all my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind, together with food and clothing, house and home, family and property; that he provides me daily and abundantly with all the necessities of life, protects me from all danger, and preserves me from all evil. All this he does out of his pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness on my part. For all of this I am bound to thank, praise, serve, and obey him. This is most certainly true.⁵¹

⁵¹BC, "The Small Catechism," p. 345.

The Christian believes that God wills to make Himself responsible for man. This responsibility of God, proceeding from His loving nature and directed toward a loveless creation, took the form of Christ, the Savior. The Christian knows that the incarnate Word is the center and foundation of his existence, because through Christ he dares to approach God. In Christ he receives divine absolution, adoption and re-direction. Luther says for all Christians,

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, delivered me and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold but with his holy and precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death, in order that I may be his, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.⁵²

The Christian believes that God engenders and sustains the response of faith in himself. He knows that his need before God is total, that he has no intrinsic means of placating God's justice. To the contrary, he is naturally at enmity with God, and actively opposes His rule. He believes that God re-creates him into a new being, sustains him by means of the Word. The Christian knows that his spiritual power is derived entirely from God, and that God's active Word daily returns him to seek forgiveness. Luther says,

I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe

⁵² Ibid.

in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and abundantly forgives all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and on the last day he will raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true.⁵³

The unique fact of Christian life is that the believer functions in the Spirit of love. Far from being a self-engendered emotion, Christian love is the result and instrumental essence of God's love made manifest in the individual. The Christian finds that this love fulfills the stern demands of God's Law.⁵⁴ In Christ, the satisfaction of Christian duty becomes the natural expression of Christian love. Motivated by divine agape, by means of the Word, the Christian serves the essential need of his fellow man. That is, he is not merely passively good, in the sense that his goodness is the avoidance of evil. His Christianity does not only consist in the absence of evil deeds, but also in the doing of godly deeds. He carries out the work and will of the Father. He moves to "seek and save that which was lost,"⁵⁵ because the love of Christ lives in him.⁵⁶

The divine call to the holy life comes to the whole man.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ BC, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," p. 127.

⁵⁵ Matt. 18:11.

⁵⁶ BC, "Formula of Concord," p. 474.

The Christian learns that it is impossible to compartmentalize the action of God's Word in his life. He sees his every action and relation as a vehicle for the Word. He can drive a nail or empty a wastebasket to the glory of God. His job is an implementation of the Word of creation. His recreation is divine recreation. In personal relationships he will reflect the image of Christ which emanates from him. Seeing himself as a uniquely gifted individual, he develops and applies his own inner and individual resources as gifts of God to be utilized in the service of the Word.⁵⁷

The Christian finds that this temporal life is a daily battle for the survival of the Word in himself. Though all things are his in Christ, he is yet aware that he is still in process of attainment.⁵⁸ He regularly fails in the practice of his faith. He sees his actions and thoughts denying the very essence of what he was called to be. A saint in Christ, he is nevertheless a sinner in the world.⁵⁹ But, impelled by the power of the sustaining Word, he returns daily to the Means of Grace for renewal of faith and forgiveness. He gratefully accepts the ministrations of his fellow saints, receiving the comfort and admonition of the Word in their service of edification. He recalls his Baptism as the means through which God claimed him as His own. He looks to Com-

⁵⁷BC, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," p. 133.

⁵⁸Phil. 3:11-14.

⁵⁹Rom. 7:14-15.

munion as the personal and substantial assurance of forgiveness and impartation of divine grace. He gladly hears, reads, marks, learns and inwardly digests⁶⁰ the Holy Scriptures which are able to give him the wisdom of salvation. Forgiven and renewed, he returns to the fight of faith, looking to the consummation of faith, eternal life in Christ.

The Nature of Christian Education

Christian education is a controlled learning process, in which the learner receives the Word of God as the determinative norm and standard of his life. Within the educational experience, he has opportunity and encouragement to develop and implement his understanding and use of the total creation in the light of his increasing knowledge of God's work and will.

The basic principle of Christian education is Christocentric:

The focal point of education must ever be Jesus Christ. Hence everything we teach, everything we learn, every experience we have, must be evaluated in terms of Jesus Christ. In Him we live and move and have our being. With Paul we say: "I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). By Him was the world created (John 1:13), by Him it is preserved (Heb. 1:3), and it exists today to serve Him and will eventually also be judged and destroyed by Him (Acts 17:31, 2 Peter 3:10). On that day the Christian will cast off all that is earthly and earthy and live in body and soul with Him and in Him

⁶⁰ "The Collect for the Word," The Lutheran Hymnal, compiled and edited by The Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics for the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1941), p. 14.

forever (Job: 19:26,27).⁶¹

Dr. Paul Bretscher states that the primary norm for the principles of Christian education is divine revelation:

A Lutheran philosophy of education draws its principles from three sources, divine revelation, reason, and science, the primary one being divine revelation. In problematic situations it always seeks to determine whether divine revelation has laid down a universal principle. Discovery of such a principle determines its course of action. If divine revelation does not disclose a principle, a Lutheran philosophy of education resorts to secondary sources such as postulates of reason and findings of science.⁶²

Christian education postulates that any understanding of the universe which does not take God into determinative account, is in fundamental error. The universe was created by God, and is sustained by the power of His Word. Though marred by sin, all nature is ruled by God's laws and subject to rational analysis. Christian education does not presume that man's logic is sufficient to grasp the totality of the divine order of creation. Yet it does claim that man is partially able to understand the working of God's natural law.⁶³

⁶¹ Arthur C. Repp, Principles of Religious Teaching, Correspondence Course 271 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, n.d.), I, 8.

⁶² Paul Bretscher, "Toward a Philosophy of Lutheran Education," Readings in the Lutheran Philosophy of Education, edited by L. G. Bickel and Raymond F. Surburg (River Forest: Lutheran Education Association, c.1956), XIII, 66.

⁶³ Frederick Nohl, editor, An Instrument for Evaluating Lutheran Elementary Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1958), p. 18. Hereafter An Instrument for Evaluating Lutheran Elementary Schools will be referred to as LES.

The crown of God's creation is man, who was endowed with the image of God, and entrusted with the rule of this world. While the image of God was lost, the divine command to subdue the earth was never rescinded. Christian educators look upon scientific study, analysis and application as the implementation of this command. As man learns the nature of his environment, he is better able to utilize God's gift of creation to God's greater glory and his own sustenance.⁶⁴

Christian education postulates that man lives in a world marred by sin.⁶⁵ Some observable results of sin are imperfection, deterioration and death. Through divine revelation, Christians know that though this creation is subject to the results of sin, and is destined for eventual destruction, God will create a new heaven and earth for His chosen people which will endure forever.

In this present world, Christians are to combat the power of sin in all of its forms. Though they live in the imminent expectation of a new creation, they are God's implements in the sustaining and preservation of this present world. To this end, Christian education equips Christians in all branches of knowledge. This knowledge is to be used to combat the results of sin as they are manifested in creation.⁶⁶

⁶⁴LES, p. 18.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 19.

⁶⁶A. C. Stællhorn, "The General Objectives of Lutheran Education," Readings in the Lutheran Philosophy of Education, p. 70.

In the physical sciences, Christians should learn to better utilize God's natural laws. The Christian farmer learns to preserve and replenish the richness of the earth through soil conservation, crop rotation, irrigation, weed control, etc., because it is God's earth, and he is its caretaker. The Christian doctor studies microbiology, bacteriology, neurology, etc., because he has accepted the divine commission to preserve God's gift of life. The Christian engineer studies structural engineering, mathematics, etc., because his work contains and controls those forces which are erratic in nature, which would mutilate God's creation and hinder man's existence.⁶⁷

In the social sphere, Christians should learn to utilize the potential of man under God. The Christian psychiatrist, in his treatment of mental illness, restores men to the influence of God's Word as manifested in the evangelizing witness of the Church. The Christian sociologist studies the nature of cultures so that men may learn to live together in peace and harmony under God. The Christian lawyer learns to defend the rights of the innocent and prosecute the guilty in the context of a divinely instituted social order. The Christian artist awakens in man an appreciation of the aesthetic, a uniquely human gift of God which is to be used to the glory of God and the pleasure of man.⁶⁸

The basis of all Christian education is the Word of God. The

⁶⁷ LES, p. 30.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 29.

Word reveals the nature and action of God, the fallen nature of man, and the potential which God has made possible for His elect. In a Christian environment, controlled by agape, the teacher is enabled to apply the Word of God to the learner. The learner is enabled to apprehend his objective guilt before God, his need of the Word's action in his life, and the goals which God sets before him. By the Word, the Holy Spirit converts the heathen learner, sustains and implements the spiritual growth of the Christian learner. As the Christian learner attains new knowledge and skills, he learns to implement them in conformity to God's work and will as manifested in his life. He views the totality of life as stemming from a Christian perspective, being rooted and grounded in faith, consecrated to the service of God's tasks for him.⁶⁹

Essentially, Christian education equips the saints of God to be saints. It endeavors to teach them the methodology of the Christian life, and provides opportunity to practice that life. Christian education provides the foundation for a continued growth throughout life. It teaches the practice of worship, of prayer, of responsibility, of communication, all as implementation of God's will. Christian education is never completed in this life. It continues in accord with the learner's response and capacity. The Christian learner grows more and more into the knowledge of who he really is. And as he learns the unfolding implications of the life which he has in Christ, his utility to God's service

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

increases.⁷⁰ He learns a total and complete dependence upon the Word of God. In faith, he trusts wholly to the power and will of God in his life. Faltering, he is sustained by the Spirit and returned to the Means of Grace. Forgiven, refreshed and fortified, he renews the affirmation of his identity in Christ through the Christian life.

The Nature of Adult Pre-Membership Instruction

Adult pre-membership instruction is an educative process, and its principles are subsumed under the principles and purpose of Christian education in general. Essentially, pre-membership instruction is the mystical, inexplicable and converting work of the Holy Spirit, who uses pre-membership instruction as a vehicle of the Word of God to call, gather and enlighten His chosen people.⁷¹

The difference between Christian education and pre-membership instruction is to be found, not in principle, but in objective. Christian education aims toward the growth in sanctification of the learner's life. While recognizing that faith is not a universal prerequisite, it nevertheless assumes a prior conversion on the part of the learner.⁷² Its purpose is growth in faith. Pre-membership instruction cannot make any such assumption. It

⁷⁰Repp, op. cit., pp. 10-12.

⁷¹BC, "The Small Catechism," p. 345.

⁷²Repp, op. cit., p. 8.

cannot assume that the learner is a Christian, and therefore aims toward the initiation and implementation of faith. Obviously, there is a degree of overlap, and hard and fast lines cannot be legitimately drawn. However, the fundamental difference in functional objectives must be taken into major account.

The difference is qualitative, and not quantitative. That is, pre-membership instruction does not necessarily depend upon the degree of knowledge or faith which the learner gains. It works for the inception of faith. It depends upon the converting action of the Spirit, who radically reforms the perspective of the individual by means of the learning process. In crass example, the learner in the adult class does not learn more and more, in the expectation that the assimilation of a certain amount of knowledge will automatically produce a Christian.⁷³

The basic connection between general Christian education and adult pre-membership instruction is that the Christian principles of education hold true in both cases. As an educative process, pre-membership instruction presents the Christian view of God, man and the universe. It proceeds from a Christocentric perspective, and submits that perspective to the learner as the only completely valid picture of the human situation. It presents justification by faith as the action of God toward sinful man, and the only means whereby man may be reconciled with God and achieve his divinely intended identity.

⁷³Ibid., p. 77.

Adult pre-membership instruction could be considered to be a remedial class. It assumes that the non-Christian learner has not received adequate instruction in the fundamental facts of existence, which can be known only through divine revelation, the Scriptures. The bulk of the adult class material will therefore be drawn from the Bible. Within the class experience, human reasoning supplements the "givens" of Scripture, but does not determine the relative validity of Scriptural truths. Pre-membership instruction postulates that the Bible is objectively valid, and may be interpreted only in relation to itself.

An especially acute problem in pre-membership instruction is, that while the inception of faith is wholly the work of the Holy Spirit, the human element is always present in the communicative process. The manner in which the material is presented, the attitudes of learners toward each other and their instructor, contribute toward the acceptance of the material. At the one extreme, persuasion may take the form of manipulation of the learner. He may be "sold" on what is purported to be Christianity, but is really only the persuasive skill of the instructor.⁷⁴

The educational principle which focuses upon the problem of human manipulation versus divine persuasion is agape. Because God loves, He gives; Himself, His Son, His Spirit. In His loving nature, God establishes contact with man. More, He infuses His people with His transcendent love, that they in turn may manifest

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 13-16.

this love to all men. The Christian instructor need not attempt the impossible task of divorcing content from persuasive action. To the contrary, God's gift of agape is the persuasive action which is evident in the class experience. In love, the Christian instructor views the learners, not as objects of human manipulation, but as receptors of God's loving Word. This is the only legitimate persuasion, the dynamic persuasion of God's Word, which implements the radiation of God's loving concern from the Christian to the non-Christian.

Summary

The essential principle of the Christian faith is that God determinatively acts to recall autonomous man to His own will and purpose. In conformity with this principle, Lutheran theology does not attempt to define the essence of God and His creation apart from His creative, saving and sustaining action.

For the Christian, the Christocentric principle becomes normative to faith and life. He looks to God as his Creator, Savior and Sanctifier. In Christ, he views himself as an instrument of God, commissioned to implement the divine work and will. He holds to God's dynamic Word as his ultimate authority and strength. By the Means of Grace he is continually recalled to the sanctified identity which he shares with all Christians by means of Christ's atonement.

Within the communion of saints, the Christian ministers the Word and receives this same ministration from his fellow saints.

As he grows in his knowledge of God's will, the spirit enables him to grow into the responsible use of his gracious heritage.

Christian education is a structured ministration of God's dynamic Word. It is a means whereby the Spirit equips the Christian for the sanctified life. Adult pre-membership instruction, as one area of Christian education, serves as a vehicle through which God calls His elect to Himself, re-calls and strengthens His saints by means of His effectual Word.

The instructor who has not made a clearly defined purpose in mind will have difficulty in selecting the particular material, will be unable to inspire the learner to effective assimilation, and will have no system for measurement of learner response. The instructor who does not perceive definite objectives which the education process is geared to accomplish will have difficulty in relating particular content to his needs, will tend to critically judge the educational process and evaluate the results, and will exhibit new knowledge and attitudes in an inconsistent, unbalanced manner. When objectives are clearly stated, understood and implemented, the learning process will function at maximum efficiency, subject

¹Frederick Kohl, editor, An Instrument for Evaluating Lutheran Elementary Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954), p. 21. Hereafter An Instrument for Evaluating Lutheran Elementary Schools will be referred to as I.E.S.

²Arthur C. Kemp, Principles of Religious Teaching, Concordia Church #71 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, n.d.), I, 17.

CHAPTER IV

OBJECTIVES

The Taxonomy of Objectives

It is generally agreed that successful education depends upon the clear statement of objectives and the effective implementation of these objectives as manifested in the learner's cognitive, affective and volitional response.¹ The instructor who does not have a clearly defined purpose in mind will have difficulty in selecting the curricular material, will be unable to inspire the learner to productive assimilation, and will have no criteria for measurement of learner response. The learner who does not perceive definite objectives toward which the educative process is geared will experience difficulty in relating curriculum content to his needs, will tend to critically judge the educative process and environment, and will absorb new knowledge and attitudes in an inconclusive, sporadic and purposeless manner.² When objectives are clearly stated, understood and implemented, the learning process will function at maximum efficiency, subject

¹Frederick Nohl, editor, An Instrument for Evaluating Lutheran Elementary Schools (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1958), p. 20. Hereafter An Instrument for Evaluating Lutheran Elementary Schools will be referred to as LES.

²Arthur C. Repp, Principles of Religious Teaching, Correspondence Course 271 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, n.d.), I, 17.

to the learner's response to the proposed objectives, as developed in the class experience.³

Though educators will agree that explicit definition of objectives is an indispensable prerequisite to the learning process, this is one of the few times that one finds a uniform opinion relating to the formulation of objectives. An overview of literature relating to educative theory would seem to indicate that there is a great variety of statements of objectives.⁴ Perhaps there are two aspects to the basic problem of objective formulation. First, objectives are the application and implementation of the principles or educative philosophies of educators. When the principles of educators are not in agreement, it is inevitable that objectives will differ. The second aspect of the problem is that objectives, unlike principles, are not static, but dynamic. That is, as one objective is achieved, modified objectives must be formulated to meet the evolved needs of the learner. These two aspects will now be discussed in greater detail.

The achievement of an objective is the dynamic implementation of the fundamental principles which constitute a justification for the educative process, with specific relation to the learner's response to the body of knowledge to be presented in the class experience. That is, an educational objective is achieved when the

³ Ibid.

⁴ Max D. Engelhart, Edward J. Furst, Walker H. Hill and David R. Krathwohl, Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (New York: David McKay Company, c.1956), I, 44-50.

learner utilizes what his instructor wanted him to learn, within the context of the educative principles accepted by teacher and learner as normative. To state the proposition functionally,

There is little difference between the objectives of education and the purpose of life. If we know why we are in the world and of what our life is to consist, we can determine our educational objectives accordingly.⁵

If the purpose of life, the objective of education, derives from either theocentric or anthropocentric principles, it is in only incidental conformity to Christian educative objectives, which are seen to center in the Christocentric principle. Educational objectives which derive from a theocentric principle may lead to a hierarchical concept of man's worth, relative to his devotion to God's service. The most worthy objective of life could be celibate, monastic service. Less worthy would be priestly service to the Church. And least worthy would be the service of the laity. In terms of knowledge, theology would form the most worthy objective, with the secular sciences relegated to a subsidiary position. When objectives derive from anthropocentric principles, theology ultimately loses all relevance. The comfort, development and achievements of man, individually and in society, become the objectives of education.

When education centers in the Christocentric principle, its objectives are formulated in terms of God's creative, saving and sustaining action upon the learner, which engenders the learner's

⁵Wm. A. Kramer, "When Is a Lutheran School Christian?," Lutheran Education, XCVI (March, 1961), 326.

desire to implement the will of God in his total environment. Objectives of Christian education are not learner centered, but may be stated in terms of learner response to God's work and will. The learner receives the action of God's Word upon his heart, which results in his justification by faith. Having become a new creature in Christ Jesus, his objectives are the objectives of God's dynamic Word. Motivated by, and in response to the Word, he returns his life to God in spiritual and substantial consecration. This consecration results in the horizontal objective of implementation of God's creative, saving and sustaining Word to his fellow man and environment.⁶

One way of testing the validity of a Christian educative principle is to determine whether or not it can be comprehensively implemented. For a principle is static, and never changes. Man's understanding and application of a valid principle may vary and develop, but not the principle itself. Objectives, the implementation of principle, do change. This is because objectives call for a response on the part of the learner. When the desired response is obtained, the immediate objective is realized.⁷ Then new or modified objectives, based upon the enduring principle, must be formulated.

Some objectives may be stated in such a broad and comprehen-

⁶W. J. Gernand, "Basic Purposes of Christian Education," Report of the 1954 Educational Conference, held under the auspices of the Board for Parish Education; The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod (St. Louis: n.p., 1954), pp. 47-51.

⁷Repp, loc. cit.

sive manner that their complete fulfillment is impossible in this life. These are general and ultimate objectives.⁸ For all practical purposes, they do not change. They remain constant goals throughout this life. However, the learner is capable of an eschatological fulfillment of these general objectives by means of God's dynamic and completing Word. An example of such an ultimate objective is Christ's command: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁹ The objective is personal perfection. In a world characterized by imperfection, the Christian strives toward this goal, knowing that it will be ultimately granted in heaven.¹⁰

When general objectives are applied to Christian education, they are diagrammed so that component objectives may be related to the educative process. These component objectives are capable of relative achievement by the learner in this life, and therefore constitute functional objectives. For example, the general objective of perfection may be subdivided into component functional objectives. One subsidiary objective might be that the learner perfect his vocational skills. Another functional objective might be that the learner perfect his knowledge of God's written Word. Objectives such as these are capable of relative attain-

⁸A. C. Stellanor, "The General Objectives of Lutheran Education," Readings in the Lutheran Philosophy of Education, edited by L. G. Bickel and Raymond F. Surburg (River Forest: Lutheran Education Association, c.1956), XIII, 69-70.

⁹Matt. 5:48.

¹⁰Phil. 2:12.

ment in this life.¹¹

As a functional objective is attained, modified and more comprehensive objectives derive from the result. For example, the child who has mastered reading skills finds that this objective was not an end in itself, but that its attainment opens the way for acquiring more knowledge and developing new skills. The child also finds that if he is to retain the results of his achieved objective, he must continue to utilize the skills and knowledge which he has already perfected. New functional objectives are therefore formulated with a view to retaining the results of achieved objectives, and utilizing these skills and knowledge as the foundation for the attainment of the new objectives. Functional objectives relate directly to learner response, and modify, develop and change in accord with the learner's growth.

An objective of God's dynamic Word is that the learner receive justification by faith. When the Holy Spirit motivates the learner to accept Christ's work of justification as his own, this objective is achieved. The modified learner objective is progressive sanctification of life, based upon and motivated by God's constant Word. For purposes of discussion, it is possible to speak in terms of primary and secondary objectives. In a chronological sense, justification by faith is the primary objective of adult pre-membership instruction. Sanctification of faith and life encompasses the area of secondary objectives.

¹¹Luke 18:20-23.

The General Objectives of Christian Education

The general objectives of Christian education are ultimate. They transcend time and this present cosmos, look to God's fulfillment in eternity. These objectives endure unchanging and immutable until the Last Day. The principle which governs these objectives is the action of God Himself, His dynamic Word. The ultimate result of these general objectives is heaven, communion with God. Insofar as it has been revealed to man, no new or modified objectives will derive from the attainment of these objectives, because the purpose of God's creation will have been fulfilled.¹² The general objectives of Christian education are transcendent, and find their fulfillment in the person and essence of God.¹³

The entire universe was created to the glory of God. Man, the crown of creation, is to reflect His glory.¹⁴ If the purpose of Christian education relates to the purpose of life,¹⁵ the conclusion is inevitable that Christian education has God's glory as its single guiding and ultimate objective. While Lutheran educators appear agreed that the one objective of every-

¹² Matt. 5:17-18.

¹³ 1 John 2:5.

¹⁴ Rev. 4:11.

¹⁵ Kramer, op. cit., p. 328.

thing within the universe is the glory of God,¹⁶ they are remarkably reticent in defining the nature of this glory. The ultimate objective of Christian education stands in stark and unadorned simplicity, soli Deo gloria!

Considering the fact that Lutheran educators have exhaustively defined the functional objectives of Christian education,¹⁷ it appears illogical that the ultimate objective should not be explicitly defined. However, as one begins to study the nature of God's glory, it becomes apparent that it is undefined because it is indefinable. The glory of God is the ultimate and immediate manifestation of Himself, in His complete and incomprehensible essence.¹⁸ God's glory is not a descriptive attribute of the godhead, but is the closest human terminology can come to the naming of God's essential power and majesty, the unique and intrinsic affirmation and manifestation of God's identity by Himself and His creation.¹⁹

Man's reason cannot define God's glory because there is nothing which man has experienced which can compare to it. The glory of God transcends all of the superlatives which man can muster, and stands alone, indefinable, unknowable in this present

¹⁶Stellhorn, loc. cit.

¹⁷Repp, op. cit., pp. 17-21.

¹⁸1 John 3:2.

¹⁹Is. 35:1-10.

age.²⁰ Only in terms of the beatific vision, when the Word will have consummated its purpose, will man be enabled to fully comprehend the ultimate objective of Christian education, the purpose of life, the glory of God.²¹

While temporal man cannot comprehend the full dimension of God's ultimate objective, God is working out in man finite general objectives, which will move him toward God's ultimate purpose. Man can begin to comprehend God only in terms of God's action upon himself. The salvation of fallen man is God's initial objective. God's action upon an estranged humanity centers in the incarnate Word. Justification by faith is the work of God which is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ. Christian education has as its initial and continuing objective the full and clear declaration of man's real condition; his condemnation under God's Law, and the summons to salvation by means of the Gospel.

Christian educators recognize that the personal appropriation of justification by faith is wholly the work of the Holy Spirit, and therefore Christian education does not attempt to arrogate to itself the prerogative of the Spirit, the engendering of faith.²² Nevertheless, the Spirit does use people as vehicles of the Word. Accepting the divine commission, Christian education has the objec-

²⁰ 1 Cor. 13:12.

²¹ Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by Theodore Engelder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1951), II, 388.

²² A. C. Mueller, "The Theological Basis of a Lutheran Philosophy of Education," Readings in the Lutheran Philosophy of Education, p. 58.

tive of presenting the full and complete Word to mankind. Stated negatively, Christian education should not hinder God's justifying Word by human suppositions or misdirection.

Justification by faith is both a general and a functional objective of Christian education. Objective justification has been won by Christ's death on the cross. In terms of the individual man, personal acceptance of justification is achieved by means of the dynamic Word, and is therefore functional. In terms of humanity, it is general, and is the continuing objective of Christian education.²³ This general objective endures throughout time and will culminate in eternity when every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord.²⁴

The complete restoration of man to fellowship with God is the general objective of Christian education, which is sequential to the converting action of God's Word.²⁵ This objective, aiming toward the complete restoration of man, may be termed the progressive sanctification of life, which finds its ultimate fulfillment in heaven. In terms of number, but not of relative importance, the majority of the functional objectives of Christian education related directly to the general objective of progressive sanctification. The immediate aims of Christian education have to do with the perfecting of God's saints, here, upon this earth.

²³Stellhorn, loc. cit.

²⁴Phil. 2:11.

²⁵Stellhorn, loc. cit.

In this life, the complete restoration of man to full communion with God is hindered by man's persistently sinful nature, the "old Adam" which daily attempts to subvert the will of God in the individual and reassert the autonomy of self. Though the Christian has become a new creature in Christ Jesus, he needs the sustaining power of God's dynamic Word to maintain and enrich the life of the spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches him to disown the claims of self, to seek and claim what God gives. Christian education endeavors to provide the learner with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, to provide the opportunity and incentive to develop his skill in the use of the Word as he engages in the fight of faith.²⁶

Christian education teaches the learner to implement God's work and will in his daily living. Having been turned to faith, the Christian is a child of God. Christian education provides the pattern and power of Christian growth into the full maturity of the Christ-man. As he grows into his heritage, he grows into the responsible use of himself and his environment. As the Holy Spirit guides him to understand what God intended him to be, he grows into his new identity.

Christian education points the Christian toward the ultimate goal of sharing in the glory of God Himself. In heaven, the Word will have been fulfilled. God will communicate with man, not by means of His Word, but immediately and directly. Man will live

²⁶Eph. 6:10-18.

with God in transcendent and indefinable bliss.²⁷

The general objectives of Christian education are without parallel in human experience. They can be known only through divine revelation and can be realized only through divine intervention. In his natural state, man is able to formulate general objectives of education which are abortive, in that they intend to confirm man as an autonomous being, with no purpose in life other than self-satisfaction, a speculative and false transcendentalism. It is only within the framework of Christian general objectives that man can apprehend an objectively valid purpose in life, and glimpse the transcendent reward which awaits the doer of the Word.²⁸

The Primary Objective of Adult Pre-Membership Instruction

Adult pre-membership instruction holds a unique place in Christian education. As attestation to this statement, one need only consider the fact that pre-membership instruction is normally a requirement for all who wish to become communicant members of a Lutheran congregation. Other areas of Christian education, whether related to a Lutheran school, or local parish education, are encouraged, but not required. Christians are urged to participate in all relevant forms of Christian education, but lack of participation in some specific class does not bar the individual from the corporate life.

²⁷ Pieper, loc. cit.

²⁸ Gernand, op. cit., p. 49.

One can understand the unique position which adult pre-membership instruction holds in relation to Christian education, when the tangible result of the course is considered. This is Baptism, or profession of faith, which recalls the individual to the promise of faith and forgiveness which he had from God in his prior Baptism. Baptism and conversion will now be considered within the context of their relation to the primary objective of adult pre-membership instruction.

Reflecting the position of the Lutheran Confessions, Mayer states: "Baptism is not only a symbol of the new birth, not only a promise of the new life, but it actually creates what it symbolizes."²⁹ By means of the dynamic Word, Baptism effectually works forgiveness of sins and creates faith in the heart of the believer. This is the substantial effect of conversion.³⁰ Luther describes the enduring effect of Baptism:

Therefore Baptism remains forever. Even though we fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access to it so that we may again subdue the old man. But we need not again have the water poured over us. Even if we were immersed in water a hundred times, it would be only one Baptism, and the effect and signification of Baptism would continue and remain. Repentance, therefore is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, to resume and practice what had earlier been begun but abandoned.³¹

²⁹F. E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America (Second edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956), p. 163.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 158-160.

³¹"The Large Catechism," The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer and Arthur C. Piepkorn (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959), p. 446. Hereafter the Book of Concord will be referred to as BC.

It would appear that Luther would rule out the possibility of conversion's taking place after Baptism. Rather, coming to faith after Baptism is not the inception of the new life, conversion,³² but a return to it. Luther amplifies:

Here you see that Baptism, both by its power and by its signification comprehends also the third sacrament, formerly called Penance, which is really nothing else than Baptism. What is repentance but an earnest attack on the old man and an entering upon a new life? If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in Baptism, which not only announces this new life but also produces, begins, and promotes it.³³

While conversion does not take place after Baptism, it does take place either through Baptism or prior to it. Wentz points out that the effectual power of conversion is the Word of God, which may be received in the form of the written, spoken or baptizing Word.³⁴ The conversion of the thief on the cross further illustrates that the inception of faith may be brought about solely through the spoken Word.³⁵

As the foregoing is considered in the light of adult pre-membership instruction, it becomes apparent that, for the unbaptized, such instruction has the primary objective of working conversion in the learner, which is ratified by subsequent Baptism. For the baptized learner, pre-membership instruction serves to

³²W. H. Wentz, "Conversion," Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954), p. 259.

³³BC, "The Large Catechism," p. 445.

³⁴W. H. Wentz, "Conversion," The Abiding Word (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1946), I, 177.

³⁵Luke 23:40-43.

recall to Baptism, to work contrition and restore to faith. In both cases, the functional objective of pre-membership instruction is the same; that the learner come to a cognitive, affective and volitional awareness and reception of what God works in and through Baptism, repentance and faith. Luther cuts through the semantic haze surrounding Baptism and conversion:

Therefore, I say; if you did not believe before, then believe afterward and confess, "The Baptism indeed was right, but unfortunately I did not receive it rightly." I myself, and all who are baptized must say before God: "I come here in my faith, and in the faith of others, nevertheless I cannot build on the fact that I believe and many people are praying for me. On this I build, that it is thy Word and command."³⁶

The functional objective of adult pre-membership instruction is the reception of faith in Christ, by the learner. The means through which God bestows this faith is His dynamic Word. The tangible, inceptive and sustaining proof of faith is the water of the Word, holy Baptism. The individual Christian is often unable to determine just when conversion has taken place in his heart. But Baptism provides him with the comfort, joy and assurance that God has converted him and claimed him as His own. In renewed faith he daily returns to his Baptism as God's unfailing sign and seal of forgiveness. Pre-membership instruction then points to an intangible conversion, and the tangible assurance of the new life in Christ, holy Baptism.

It is submitted that the primary, initial objective of adult pre-membership instruction is conversion. In contra-distinction

³⁶BC, "The Large Catechism," pp. 443-444.

to all subsequent forms of Christian instruction, it does not primarily aim for growth in faith, but is a call to faith. Just as the prerequisite to physical growth is physical birth, so the antecedent to spiritual growth is spiritual birth.³⁷ The mediate seal of this new life is Baptism. In terms of strictest logic, adult pre-membership instruction is primarily designed to serve the unbaptized learner.

In the practical situation, the basic issue may be largely obscured when all of the learners are assumed to be on the same spiritual plane. Analytically, the class is composed of three types of learners: the unbaptized; baptized, but lapsed Christians; and baptized, practicing Christians. The primary objective of the call to faith meets the fundamental need of the unbaptized, recalls the lapsed to their Baptism, recalls practicing Christians to the Spirit's bestowal of faith and strengthens them in the resolve to continue and grow into the sanctified life. Pre-membership instruction is an implementation of God's call to repentance and faith. It is aimed toward the non-Christian, but also serves to recall the baptized people of God to the unique identity which is theirs in Christ. The creative, saving and sustaining purpose of pre-membership instruction could be summed up in the words of the exalted Christ,

I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."

³⁷ James D. Smart, The Teaching Ministry of the Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1954), p. 165.

And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.³⁸

If the primary purpose of adult pre-membership instruction is conversion, the dynamic call to a new life, it is apparent that human resources are inadequate to implement this objective. Conversion is wholly the work of the Spirit. Then what is the relation of the instructor to this objective? The answer is to be found in the fundamental Christocentric principle of Christian education. God chooses to work His will upon men by the Means of Grace. The Christian instructor is a vehicle of God's Word. The Word is conveyed through him to the learner, where the Holy Spirit effects His will. The instructor speaks the Word of God, directs the learner to the written Word. The instructor conveys the Word of justification. The Spirit works the objective of the Word, repentance and faith, which result in forgiveness and sanctification of life.

There are many ways of stating the primary objective of pre-membership instruction, each of which is valid when subsumed under the principle of the dynamic Word. God's primary objective is the mediate conversion of the learner, the personal engendering of faith and imputation of Christ's justification. The instructor's primary objective is the ministry of the judging and forgiving Word, the clear and explicit declaration of God's judgement on sin and the proclamation of forgiveness in Christ. In implemen-

³⁸Rev. 22:16-17.

tation of this objective, the instructor attempts to reflect God's picture of man's complete condemnation under the Law, and his transcendent salvation under the Gospel. The Church's primary objective is the Baptism of the learner into the called body of Christ and the restoration of the lapsed to the communion of saints. The primary objective of the learner is that he experience repentance and faith. The cohering principle and objective of adult pre-membership instruction is that God is acting through His Word and through His people to call His elect to Himself.

The Secondary Objectives of Adult Pre-Membership Instruction

The secondary objectives of adult pre-membership instruction derive from the primary objective. Justification by faith is a "new birth" and results in a new life. The secondary objectives delineate the pattern of the new life. Gernand says,

When man in his natural state comes under the influence of the word of God, he is reborn as a child of God, indeed, but also as a spiritual infant; and therefore he must grow in knowledge, in faith, and as he does so, in Christian character and in Christian personality. Ultimately, he should become a perfectly adult human being in the re-creational sense of the term. St. Paul says, that we should "Come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4, 13). The encouraging and fostering of the re-creation and growth in Christ is then our second basic aim in Christian education.³⁹

It is vital to adult pre-membership instruction that secondary objectives do not assume a primary status. That is, the Christocentric character of Christian education must be maintained.

³⁹Gernand, op. cit., p. 50.

Christian secondary objectives may often be concurrent to the primary objectives of secular education. If the radical distinction between the two is not maintained, Christian education runs the risk of assuming a moralistic and syncretistic flavor. In the adult pre-membership class, it must be made perfectly clear that the Christian life cannot be compared to the behavior of non-Christians. While there may be apparent parallels in the external actions of Christians and non-Christians, these actions are only incidentally congruent results of radically differing principles. The Christian functions in and by the Word. The non-Christian functions by the norms of society and self.

When the Christocentric principle is ignored in adult pre-membership instruction, the objectives become a deceptive harmonization of God's grace and man's will. An example of such a syncretizing tendency would be the non-Christian learner who remarks to the pastor: "I'm glad I came to your classes. I've always tried to live in just the manner you've described." Such an attitude is a confusion of primary and secondary objectives. Christian secondary objectives can be attained only within the context of the new life which Christians receive as the gift of God. When Christian secondary objectives are raised to a primary position, the learner is being educated into a life of hypocrisy. He is learning the similitude of Christian behavior, without its essence.

It is not to be implied that the instructor deliberately removes the Christocentric principle from adult pre-membership

instruction. Rather, the instructor must be on his guard lest the learner reject the primary objective and accept the secondary objectives. In the process, the learner may gain the impression that Christian behavior is to be equated with saving faith.

Secondary objectives of adult pre-membership instruction which derive from the Christocentric principle are not as thorough and detailed as are the functional objectives of Christian education in its broader scope. This is due to the fact that Christian education is generally structured over a period of years, whereas pre-membership instruction is a "crash program" which endeavors to inculcate the fundamental secondary objectives of Christianity, relegating continued and expanded Christian education to the time when the learner has been accepted into the communicant membership and participates in the parish education program.

An advantage to a comparatively short period of pre-membership instruction is that it forces the instructor to distill secondary objectives to their essential function. The essential character of such secondary objectives is that they are a description of the Christocentric principle of the dynamic Word in action. That is, secondary objectives are the actualization of the primary objective. The non-Christian learns what God can make of him. The Christian learns what he is. Basically, secondary objectives are God's call to the identity which Christians have in Christ.

One secondary objective of adult pre-membership instruction is that the Spirit enables the convert to grow in his relationship to God. Subsumed under this objective is the implementation of

the knowledge and skills which help the Christian to remain and grow in faith. The convert becomes familiar with the Bible as God's inspired Word. He learns the central and fundamental teachings of Scripture in the light of the Christocentric principle. He learns the elementary vocabulary of Christian theology. He receives the motivation to continue his study of the written Word.⁴⁰ As the convert is enabled to grow in his relationship to God, he learns to receive the Means of Grace as God's means of drawing men to Himself and sustaining them in that relationship. He daily refers to God's promise and confirmation of faith in Baptism, eagerly looks forward to the recreation and strengthening of faith which the Lord's Supper offers him. The convert learns the practice of prayer, of corporate and private worship.⁴¹

Guided by the Spirit, the convert grows into a greater understanding of what it means to be a created being, responsible to God. He grows into a filial relationship with his heavenly Father, daily consecrates himself, body and soul to the service of the Word. As God continues to develop his total life, the convert sees himself as an increasingly skillful instrument of God's will.

The Spirit teaches the convert to grow in his relationship to his fellow man by relinquishing and suppressing all desires toward autonomy, and allows God to use him as His minister to people. In his personal and family relationships, the convert is

⁴⁰Repp, op. cit., p. 21.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 23.

enabled to view others as objects of God's love and compassion.⁴² In faith, he learns to participate in the mission of the Church, learns the practice of edification of the saints, and learns to receive the ministration of the household of faith. In faith he perceives that the only valid motivation for the performance of good works, the life of the Spirit, is to live within the context of God's dynamic Word.

The convert learns that nature is the possession of God, and that man is to serve as caretaker.⁴³ He learns to view his vocation as a means of implementing God's creative and sustaining Word. The convert is enabled to grow into the unfolding realization that nature is God's gift to man, not only to be preserved, but to be enjoyed.⁴⁴ He learns that fleecy clouds in a blue sky, rolling combers breaking against a ship's bow, the howl of a coyote -- all attest to the glory of God.

The secondary objectives of adult pre-membership instruction may all be subsumed under the concept of God's creative, saving and sustaining Word. The convert learns that even as God creates all that exists, so man is to use God's creation in the building of implements, shelter and clothing to His greater glory. Works of art, created by man, are manifestations of the aesthetic and intellectual gifts which God has bestowed upon His highest creation.

⁴² Ibid., p. 24.

⁴³ LES, p. 30.

⁴⁴ Mayer, op. cit., p. 172.

Even as God provides the means of man's salvation, so the convert is empowered to act as God's instrument in the proclamation of salvation. As God sustains and preserves His creation and His Church, so the Spirit enables the convert to rely upon God's sustaining Word of forgiveness, to build and preserve the Church, to act as God's leaven in the world.

Secondary objectives of adult pre-membership instruction provide the pattern and motivation for the Christian life. They do not provide a diploma of graduation from the school of Christian education. Pre-membership instruction is a beginning, not the end of the Christian learning process. If the instructor feels that the learners have not accepted the principle which is common to all of the secondary objectives, growth in the Christian life, then he may have to prolong instruction. If, on the other hand, the learners have received the Spirit's motivation to grow in faith and Christian knowledge, continued Christian education will come as a matter of course.

Summary

The fundamental objective of Christian education is that man may live in complete conformity to the will of God. Since man constitutes himself an autonomous being and lacks the inherent desire or ability to rid himself of sin and its consequences, he is unable to conform to the will of God. By means of the dynamic Word, the Holy Spirit converts the Christian to a God-willed existence and enables the new life of the Christian.

The objectives of Christian education cannot be achieved by man, but are achieved by the action of God's Word. The Christian educator is a vehicle of God's Word, but the Holy Spirit is the determinative power which creates and sanctifies the new faith and life by means of Christ's perfect atonement.

The objectives of adult pre-membership instruction are obtainable only through the work of the Spirit. The primary, initial objective is conversion, the call to repentance and faith. The secondary, progressive objective is growth in the Christian faith and life. Both primary and secondary objectives will ultimately be realized in the eschatological beatific vision.

which affects the learning process. Not only is the material a part of the curriculum, but also the attitudes of instructor and pupils, the methods and techniques of instruction, the physical surroundings, and external influences which contribute to the process. While teaching is a planned process which aims toward objectives, it is recognized that learning is conditioned by both planned and unplanned factors. For example, while the instructor may or may not be aware of the affective interplay in the class situation, a developing group dynamic is nevertheless an existent fact. Curriculum development attempts to structure material, experiences and surroundings in a manner most conducive to the learning needed and the attainment of the desired objectives. Means are provided to assess and structure factors which contri-

CHAPTER V

CURRICULUM

Definition of the Curriculum

A dictionary definition of "curriculum" gives the primary meaning of "a course of study," and secondarily, "the whole body of courses offered in an educational institution, or by a department thereof."¹ Educators use the term in a broadened sense so that it may refer not only to a body of knowledge which is taught in a class or classes, but also embraces the total environment which affects the learning process. Not only is the material a part of the curriculum, but also the attitudes of instructor and class members, the methods and techniques of instruction, the physical surroundings, and external influences which penetrate the classroom. While teaching is a planned process which aims toward objectives, it is recognized that learning is conditioned by both planned and unplanned factors. For example, while the instructor may or may not be aware of the affective interplay in the class situation, a developing group dynamic is nevertheless an existent fact. Curriculum development attempts to structure material, experiences and surroundings in a manner most conducive to the learning process and the attainment of the desired objectives. Means are provided to assess and structure factors which contri-

¹Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., c.1951), p. 204.

bute to improved learning as they become evident.²

From the perspective of God's will toward men, it can be said that Christian curriculum development is the sanctified battle against the forces of the devil, world and flesh. Functionally, adult Christian education, the teaching and learning process, is the communication of God's Word to men and through men. This process of education must be structured because the lines of communication are not naturally open.³ The impediment to communication between God and men is sin and its results. That is, when men are confronted by God's communication, their natural desire is to pervert or ignore it. The existential result is a selfish and self-centered being who is incapable of initiating communication with God. Divine communication must be divinely initiated through the Word.⁴

An element which is basic to the effective functioning of Christian education is the dynamic Word of God. Education is truly Christian when the Holy Spirit is operative upon and through the curriculum. It cannot be said that the action of the Word is one of many factors to be considered in curriculum development. Rather, all other factors are subsumed under the work of the Spirit.

² Arthur C. Repp, Principles of Religious Teaching, Correspondence Course 271 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, n.d.), I, 43-44.

³ Is. 64:6.

⁴ Eph. 2:9.

The affirmation of the Word's power upon and through the total curriculum is an application of the Christocentric principle to the learning process. The Holy Spirit of God acts by means of the creative, saving and sustaining Word. This dynamic Word utilizes Christocentric material, people and environment as vehicles toward the objective of calling God's elect.

It would be impertinent for the instructor to assume that he develops the curriculum, teaches, awakens a response in the learner -- and only then invokes the converting action of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is not a force to be turned on and off at human will.⁵ To the contrary, the Spirit acts by means of the Word upon the total curriculum of Christian education. The instructor should invoke the action of the Spirit upon the curriculum, and give God the glory as he sees the Word take effect in the hearts and lives of people.

The purpose of Christian curriculum development is not to initiate or control the action of the Holy Spirit, but to conform the curriculum to the Christocentric Word, so that this Word may "have free course" and be administered "to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people."⁶ That is, curriculum development attempts to obviate all factors which would hinder the action of the Word, to implement and focalize the pure and dynamic Gospel

⁵Is. 55:11.

⁶"The Collect for the Church," The Lutheran Hymnal, compiled and edited by The Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics for the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1941), p. 14.

upon the learner, and to provide opportunity and encouragement for learner response.

Major factors which relate to the curriculum development of the adult pre-membership class will now be considered. It should be pointed out that, while these factors can be isolated for purposes of analysis, they are functionally interrelated. A degree of overlap in the discussion is therefore inevitable.

The Material

One of the first decisions which the instructor faces in the development of the adult pre-membership curriculum is the choice of materials which will form the basis of study. In keeping with Lutheran educational principles, the Bible is the primary and normative source of all religious knowledge.⁷ While the Bible may be the sole material used in the curriculum, it is more common for the class to use the Bible, adult pre-membership manuals or outlines, and possible supplementary readings. All materials used are to reflect the teachings of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

In the past, no guidelines appear to have been developed for the use of writers of curriculum materials. Published manuals appear to have been developed upon an empirical basis, subject to the approval of synodical boards of parish education. Published

⁷A. C. Mueller, "The Theological Basis of a Lutheran Philosophy of Education," Readings in the Lutheran Philosophy of Education, edited by L. G. Bickel and Raymond F. Surburg (River Forest: Lutheran Education Association, c.1956), XIII, 52.

Lutheran adult pre-membership manuals therefore exhibit a wide variety of styles, quality and quantity of material. An advantage to this lack of control has been that writers were freed to develop experimental variations which were designed to facilitate the learning process in general and specific situations. Thus, manual style may range anywhere from a workbook based upon the catechetical method,⁸ to an essay type of construction with appended review questions.⁹ Manuals have exhibited a rich variety of organizing principles, which include liturgics,¹⁰ polemics,¹¹ the Small Catechism,¹² etc.

Disadvantages to the free development of adult pre-membership manuals are numerous. Pastors have no uniform standards by which to gauge the amount and depth of Christian knowledge to which transfers to the local congregation have been previously exposed. Instructors must render a subjective value judgement in their choice of manuals, which may or may not reflect the needs of the learners. Writers using a thematic approach may find difficulty in including a comprehensive exposition of the total Christian faith and life. Undue emphasis may be given to a particular methodology which may

⁸ Oswald Riess, What Does the Bible Say? (Third and revised edition; Detroit: n.p., 1956).

⁹ Martin J. Heineken, Basic Christian Teachings (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, c.1949).

¹⁰ Donald L. Deffner, The Doctrine of the Liturgy (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, 1960).

¹¹ Paul G. Hansen, Testing the Truth (Denver: n.p., 1957).

¹² H. Paul Boehne, Fundamental Facts of Faith (N.p., n.d.).

hamper the learning experience. Additional problems may arise in the areas of relative vocabularies, theological emphasis, format, etc.

While extant pre-membership manuals exhibit considerable variation, the major Lutheran Church bodies are presently engaged in independent evaluations which should eventuate in guidelines and manuals reflecting the comprehensive utilization of parish experience. To date, the most detailed study of adult pre-membership instruction has been conducted by the Lutheran Church in America.¹³ The American Lutheran Church has not conducted a comprehensive research program in this area. However, they have issued a general guideline for adult Christian education.¹⁴ The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod is presently undertaking a research program in the area of adult pre-membership instruction.¹⁵

It would appear that current evaluations of adult pre-membership materials will result in the upgrading of future materials published under the auspices of Lutheran boards of parish education. The effect should be salutary, in that instructors will have superior materials with which to work. At the same time, it

¹³The Boards of Parish Education of The American Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Augustana Lutheran Church, The Suomi Synod and The United Lutheran Church in America, The Functional Objectives For Christian Education (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959), II.

¹⁴Marvin A. Johnson and Robert G. Konzelman, Some Guidelines For Evaluation in Relation to Adult Christian Education (Minneapolis: Department of Parish Education; American Lutheran Church, 1962).

¹⁵Board of Parish Education; The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod, Survey on the Nature, Scope and Quality of Adult Membership Instruction (St. Louis: n.p., 1963).

should be recognized that materials intended for general use do not necessarily meet the varieties of specific parish experiences. In the final analysis, the responsibility for curriculum development rests with the local instructor, who is best able to meet the specific and relatively unique needs of the individual learner. It would therefore appear that pre-membership manuals intended for general use should be constructed in a manner which allows comprehensive adaptation to the local parish situation. Such manuals should include an instrument for evaluating the total curriculum so that the instructor may have an objective basis by which to gauge the relative value of the manual within the class situation.

It is submitted that a relative ideal would be attained if the instructor were to write his own manual. This procedure would have several distinct advantages over the use of materials intended for general use. Style, vocabulary and methods could be structured to meet the specific needs of the local parish. The instructor would be thoroughly conversant with the materials and would be encouraged to continually upgrade the content upon the basis of class response. The learners would benefit from the use of materials tailored to the local environment and would be stimulated in the learning process by the use of a subjectively more interesting, meaningful and applicable content.

There are several apparent disadvantages to local authorship of adult pre-membership materials. If the instructor were to write his own material, a considerable amount of time and

creative effort would be involved. It is quite possible that the initial editions would need considerable revision, and might not appear to be worth the effort, especially since more polished materials are readily available. In the cases of many instructors, especially those with relatively little experience, it might be claimed that the completed manual will often prove to be inferior in quality to the products of professional writers.

It is submitted that the person best qualified to write the adult pre-membership manual is the person who is going to teach its content. In undertaking the task of teaching, he is assuming a professional position. As a professional, he should be trained and qualified to structure curriculum material, as derived from the primary sources. While it is granted that considerable time and effort are involved, this is no more than is required of any professional in his work. And while it may also be granted that regular revision of the material may be necessary, this is another mark of the professional who acquires a growing skill with experience. In support of this thesis, two statements can be made. First, the pastor regularly engages in creative and didactic writing in his sermon preparation. Second, a perusal of published adult pre-membership manuals would indicate that the majority of them were written by men who had taught pre-membership classes. It would appear that not only are instructors qualified for the writing of curricular materials, but some do presently prepare their own materials.

While local authorship of the adult pre-membership manual

may constitute an ideal, account must also be taken of the probability that the ideal will not be universally attained. Therefore a variety of instruction manuals, designed to meet the needs of the adult pre-membership class, should be made available to the instructor. However, it is submitted that these manuals should be presented, not as textbooks, but as examples of the texts which others have developed. A parallel illustration would be the publication of books which contain collections of sermons. These sermons are not intended to be re-preached, but serve to stimulate the preacher to his own creative effort. In the same way, published manuals should stimulate the instructor to write and adapt his own material.

When initiating the development of his own curricular material, the instructor is confronted by the fact that specific criteria for adult pre-membership instruction are not generally available. The Lutheran Confessions do strongly urge the use of both of Luther's catechisms. But they are nowhere delineated as required curricular materials for adult pre-membership instruction. It would appear that they are intended for the use of baptized Christians, but not necessarily for the unbaptized. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that Luther's catechisms do constitute a summary of Christian doctrine, and may constitute tentative criteria for adult pre-membership instruction. That is, the doctrinal content of the catechisms constitutes a useful guideline in the formation of curricular material, but the catechisms themselves need not be absolutely required as adult pre-membership

texts.

In view of the apparent dearth of criteria for adult pre-membership materials, it becomes inevitable that the instructor forms his own. The following paragraphs constitute a set of criteria which this writer submits as sample. The proposed criteria are thetical, and since documentation can be only fragmentary, should be considered to be tentative proposals.

Inasmuch as the primary objective of pre-membership instruction is a call to faith, it is submitted that not only must the course as a whole present this call, but each lesson, each meeting of the class, must present a full and clear declaration of the kerygma. It is submitted that the primary response desired in the learner is repentance and faith. The means by which this response is obtained is the Word. If lesson material does not meet these basic criteria, it has no place in the adult pre-membership curriculum.

It is submitted that the secondary objectives of each lesson must be Christocentric. Each lesson should be organized in a manner which demonstrates the work and will of God toward men. This action of God evokes a response on the part of the believer. The secondary objectives of each lesson, progressive sanctification of faith and life, are initiated by the Spirit, and cannot be credited to man's own work righteousness. Within this context, each lesson should direct the learner toward a concrete response to God's will, as expressed in terms of secondary objectives. The material should not be merely informational, but should con-

vey the Word with the intent of evoking a specific life-response in the learner. Each lesson should demonstrate that faith with works is living according to God's plan. The material should be functional in terms of both God's action and man's response.

It is submitted that each manual lesson should form a complete and self-contained unit. While the learner should be encouraged to refer to a supplementary bibliography, the lesson should contain a comprehensive exposition of the subject. All terms used should be defined within the body of the lesson. Included in the lesson should be some means of stimulating learner participation, in addition to the reading of the material. Possible methods would include programed learning techniques, projects, self-evaluation by means of testing procedures, etc. It is submitted that, while Bible references may be included within the body of the lesson as "proof" texts, the major use of inductive home Bible study should be preparation for the class experience. That is, the adult pre-membership curriculum should always provide for group discussion of Bible study which is done outside of the class experience. Within this framework, inductive Bible study forms a major link between the lesson material and the class experience.

It is submitted that the organizing principle of the manual and the topic of each lesson which is subsumed under the organizing principle, are to be formulated by the instructor in the light of his understanding of learner needs. If each lesson is based upon valid primary and secondary objectives, is Christocentric

in content, the instructor should be free to organize the lessons around the topics which form the most relevant points of contact with the learners. It is submitted that topics which should be recommended for consideration include: the Word, the Creator, the nature of man, the Savior, the Holy Spirit, the Church, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, confession and absolution, the covenant, corporate worship, private worship, the Lord's Prayer, Christian vocation, the Christian family, denominational and parish orientation. Any one of these topics could form the organizing principle of the course, a section of the course, a lesson, or could be subsumed under another topic.

With reference to the number of lessons which should be included in an adult pre-membership course, an ideal rule of thumb might be that the instructor has a surplus of material available. That is, instruction should terminate upon the basis of the individual's response of repentance and faith, and not simply because a certain amount of knowledge has been covered. If a learner does not make this response, he should continue instruction until the primary objective has been achieved. In the practical situation, the instructor should structure his course so that it contains the body of knowledge which he considers minimal to an intelligent communicant membership. In addition, he should provide supplementary lessons which meet the special needs of the still uncommitted. Since there would have to be a practical limit to the amount of material, it would seem logical to re-enroll the uncommitted learner, who has gone through all of the available lessons,

in the next class.

It is submitted that each learner should be encouraged to purchase supplementary books to which the lessons will refer. These books would form the start of a basic reference library in the home of each learner. A modern version of the Bible should be an absolute requirement. In terms of curriculum planning, a personal copy of the Bible is a supplementary text. But in terms of functional use, it constitutes the norm and source of all other materials. The edition should be inexpensive enough so that the learner will have no qualms in underlining and making marginal notes. In effect, this would be a "workbook" Bible.

Supplementary materials might include The Book of Concord,¹⁶ The Lutheran Hymnal,¹⁷ Lutheran Cyclopedia,¹⁸ and other books suitable to a basic Christian library. Depending upon local circumstances, the instructor might require purchase of all or some of these books, or merely recommend purchase. One means of stimulating the acquisition of a basic library might be to offer the books at cost, or even to arrange for the congregation's partial subsidy of these books, if purchased while the learner is in the adult pre-membership class. It should be noted that if the in-

¹⁶The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer and Arthur C. Piepkorn (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1959). Hereafter the Book of Concord will be referred to as BC.

¹⁷The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1941).

¹⁸Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954).

structor recommends the purchase of supplementary materials, he is thereby assuming the responsibility of demonstrating their use and relevance to the learners. The manual should regularly direct the learner to them for amplification of the basic curricular material.

The Instructor

In common practice, the instructor of the adult pre-membership class is the pastor. While there is no specific mandate to this effect, it would appear that the practice is in keeping with the function of the pastoral office, spiritual oversight of the congregation.¹⁹ As overseer, the pastor is responsible for the thorough instruction of new members of the congregation. The most direct way of implementing this responsibility is for the pastor to personally instruct the adult pre-membership class. However, it is conceivable that this task might be delegated to a person other than the pastor. The pastor would still bear the administrative responsibility even though the job of teaching would be assigned to a qualified instructor. The most obvious examples of such an instance would be instruction by a pastor emeritus or vicar. A less likely, but theoretically possible example would be adult pre-membership instruction conducted by an elder or some other layman who has demonstrated his teaching ability. But under normal parish conditions it is assumed that

¹⁹₁ Pet. 5:2-3.

the pastor will want to assume direct responsibility for the instruction of the adult pre-membership class.

No matter what his administrative position within the parish, the adult pre-membership class instructor should be aware of the possible roles which may be assumed relative to his function within the curriculum. For purposes of discussion, five kinds of leadership roles may be distinguished: autocratic, paternalistic, permissive, participative and Christocentric. Many of the techniques of leadership roles are similar. The difference lies in the motives of the leader.²⁰

The autocratic instructor functions by virtue of the authority inherent in his office. He gives the group no representation in making decisions, setting goals or choosing activities. An example of this type of leader is the traditional picture of the military officer who expects his orders to be obeyed because he holds sufficient rank to command. The instructor who adopts this role often considers the learning process to be a "pouring in" of material, in which the learner is a passive receptacle. Learner participation and response are usually kept to a minimum by formalized rules of order. The autocratic instructor frequently views members of the class as objects of manipulation toward his own goals, and uses methods appropriate to this form of control. He may find that class reaction to his leadership is sharply divided. Those

²⁰ Jack R. Gibb, Grace N. Platts and Lorraine F. Miller, Dynamics of Participative Groups (Washington, D.C.: National Training Laboratories, c.1951), p. 16.

learners who manifest a need for autocratic leadership will exhibit a personal loyalty to the instructor, often irrespective of the curriculum content. More independent learners may manifest an affective antagonism to the instructor.²¹

The paternalistic instructor is kindly, fatherly and sympathetic to the needs of the class. His control is similar to that of the autocratic instructor. He makes the decisions and imposes them upon the class. However, the group atmosphere is usually more pleasant because the instructor exhibits a fatherly interest in the welfare of the class. This role is often assumed when the instructor has a large degree of experience upon which to draw, and a resultant self-confidence. The paternalistic leader frequently regards class members as relatively immature, and in need of his guidance. He is often a hard worker, because he fears to delegate responsibility to others. The paternalistic instructor may allow a minimum of class response because this constitutes a threat to his benevolent authority. Classes which are taught by this type of instructor may appear to function in an efficient manner. The group atmosphere is friendly and cooperative under his direction. But the subordinate and protected position of the learners fosters a dependent relationship, with little opportunity to put knowledge and skills into practice. Class members do not learn to think or function for themselves,

²¹Ibid.

because the instructor does it all for them.²²

The permissive instructor feels that the best way to lead is not to lead at all. He allows the learners to choose their own curriculum, to set their own pace, with no guidance from him. He believes in putting the learners on their own from the start, operating on the theory that when the learners make their own decisions they will be highly motivated to carry them out. The permissive instructor believes that a trial and error methodology will eventuate in meaningful and relevant experiences. A major difficulty with this type of teaching is that it promotes an anarchistic autonomy which is conducive to friction within the class. Even under the best of conditions, learning takes a relatively greater amount of time, and the results often range from mediocre to bad.²³

The participative instructor places major responsibility for group atmosphere and decision making upon the group. He seeks to foster a high level of identification of the learner with the class, and not with the leader. He works for a high degree of verbal participation, which is aimed toward the goals formulated by the class. Major emphasis is laid upon the maximum growth of all members of the group. The threat to individuals is minimized through the encouragement of inter-personal understanding.²⁴ A

²² Ibid., p. 17.

²³ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

possible defect in this type of instruction is that the experiences, knowledge and skills of the group may become normative for the individual, without specific reference to their objective validity. The learner may become dependent upon the group for decision making, and may find that he cannot adequately utilize his newly acquired skills and knowledge outside of the group experience.

The Christocentric instructor sees himself as an implement of God's Word toward the learners. His will has become subordinate to God's will. He is not autocratic because he knows that the power of salvation cannot come from self, but only from God. He is not paternalistic, because there is only one Father who has the right and authority to decide man's destiny. The Christocentric instructor is aware of man's natural will toward autonomy, and therefore avoids a permissive role which refuses to share the proclamation of the Gospel and leaves the learners blinded to God's revelation. He does not allow a participative dynamic which lets the learners set their own terms for salvation. The Christocentric instructor knows that it is only through God's action that he is sustained in the faith, and the learners can come to faith. The normative principle by which he functions is God's Word. Within this context, he utilizes the methods of leadership which are in conformity to God's will. He is theocratic, pointing to God as Creator and man's final arbiter. He is fraternalistic, seeing the learners as fellow elect, sinners like himself, to whom God extends His saving call. The Christocentric instructor teaches the learners that in Christ they may become new creatures, no

longer subject to the bondage of the Law, but people who have been permitted to live in the freedom of God's love. He invites participation in God's communion of saints, bound together by God's loving and sustaining power.

The Class

When the learner studies the lesson material at home, the dominant form of communication is the printed page. However, when the learner comes to the class, he enters into an experience in which a variety of forms of communication are in use. That is, he is helping to create a group dynamic. The most apparent communication is verbal. However, tonal inflection, facial expression, glances, all the non-verbal actions, contribute to the group dynamic. This discussion will center on the roles which learners may assume, of which verbal and non-verbal communications give evidence. It is not to be assumed that all of these roles will emerge in the class experience. Nor can it be said that an individual is bound to only one role. Rather, the following descriptions serve only as analysis of roles which should be recognized, together with their effect upon the curricular class environment.

The "harmonizer" agrees with the group, attempts to reconcile opposing positions. He gives the impression of understanding both sides of a disagreement. Because he is basically socially oriented, it is often difficult to determine his own opinions on an issue. He has a tendency to accept group conformity as a

worthwhile goal in itself. He is generally non-aggressive and pacific.²⁵

The "encourager" has an outgoing personality, is friendly, warm and responsive. When stating an opinion, he is diplomatic and attempts to avoid hurting the feelings of others. In his inter-personal relations, he builds ego or status, and makes others feel that their opinions are important and worthy of consideration.²⁶

The "clarifier" restates an issue or solution for clarification. He summarizes the conclusions which have been reached after discussion. If none of the learners assumes this role, the instructor will often take it upon himself to act as clarifier.²⁷

The "initiator" suggests procedures, problems or discussion topics. He may propose a variety of solutions. The initiator is a key man in the class experience. If he is not present, class discussion may have much difficulty in getting started. His involvement acts as stimulus to the other learners. He is the "idea man" of the group.²⁸

The "energizer" urges the group toward the proposed objectives of the class experience. He insists on covering the agenda and constantly prods to action. Sometimes the energizer exhibits

²⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 38.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

a rigid personality, and has difficulty in adjusting to new factors. He may become impatient with the progress of the rest of the class. When he makes constructive use of his role, the energizer is a definite asset in keeping discussion from wandering. However, he may hinder the learning experience by insisting that a certain amount of material must be covered, even though the class has not reached a consensus of opinion.²⁹

The "questioner" seeks orientation for himself or the group. His questions help the instructor as a dynamic evaluation of the learning process. Very often the instructor may be unaware of the fact that his explanation has not been satisfactory from the viewpoint of the class's understanding. The questioner seeks clarification of points which are unclear to him, and often is representative of other class members who are unwilling to voice the same question.³⁰

The "listener" rarely participates in class discussion. Under ideal circumstances, he maintains a participative attitude, and shows interest by facial and bodily expressions. However, his lack of verbal participation may be taken as a threat to the group. The other learners do not know what he is thinking or what his real views are. He is a potential critic and threat to those who more regularly express their ideas. He may prove to be an inhibiting and repressive influence, unless he is drawn

²⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

³⁰ Ibid.

into verbal participation.³¹

The "tension-reducer" helps the group by clowning or joking at appropriate times, thus reducing tension which may have been built up. He can exert a constructive influence upon the group atmosphere. However, if his joking is inappropriate, he may create tension, rather than reduce it.³²

The "opinion-giver" states a belief or opinion on the subject at hand, often giving his own experience to illustrate a point. When his opinions are stated tentatively, with the objective of clarifying the issue, he can be a valuable aid to the learning process. However, if his attitude is one of dogmatic assertiveness, in flat contradiction to the statements of others, he may become a disruptive influence, and engender hostility toward himself.³³

The "negativist" is a habitual fault finder. He will invariably take the negative side of a proposition, and defend his stand to the last ditch. His criticism may sometimes be constructive, but his contributions are often negated by his generally pessimistic attitude. He will regularly refuse to cooperate, and often presents himself as a foil for the instructor.³⁴

The "deserter" withdraws from the group in some way. He is

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

indifferent to the group, aloof and sometimes excessively formal. He daydreams, doodles, whispers to others. When he does participate, he is apt to wander off the subject, perhaps talking about his own experiences which may be totally unrelated to the discussion.³⁵

The "aggressor" appears to thrive on hostility. He struggles for status, boasts, criticizes or blames others, tries to get attention. In attempting to elevate his own status, he often will deflate the egos of others. He is generally a disruptive influence, and can begin to learn and contribute to the learning of others only when his own attitude undergoes constructive change.³⁶

The above classifications are intended to serve as description of the inter-personal relations which will hinder or promote the learning process in any group situation. While all perspectives may not be present in the adult pre-membership class, the instructor must consider the possibility of these influences within the curriculum. Each of them must be considered from the viewpoint of their relative influence upon the class, in help or hindrance of the communication of the Word. While none of these attitudes can be said to control the work of the Spirit, they do give indication of the relative accessibility of the learners to the action of the Word. In the final analysis, all learner attitudes should be subsumed under, or supplanted by the Christocent-

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

ric perspective, which becomes operational in the learner through God's dynamic will. The uniquely Christian group dynamic is the spirit of agape, which allows free reign to God's action of forgiveness and faith.

Methods of Teaching

Modern adult educational practice has developed a great variety of teaching methods and techniques. Many of these are directly applicable to the adult pre-membership class. Others are not. The methods which an instructor uses to facilitate the learning process reflect his philosophy of education, his concept of the learners, and the objectives of the class.³⁷ For example, if the instructor feels that the learning process is primarily the transmission of knowledge from himself to the learners, he is likely to rely on the lecture method. Class discussion may be limited to the clarification of his lecture. If the instructor follows a "Bibliocentric" philosophy of education, he may make primary use of the catechetical method, coupled with rote memorization.

When objectives are Christocentric and are stated in terms of the learner, the methods used to attain these objectives will follow suit. Christocentric methods do not find their objective in the mere transmission of Christian knowledge. Rather, they aim toward learner response, which takes the form of repentance

³⁷Repp, loc. cit.

and faith. Methods give opportunity and encouragement for the learner's implementation of Christian knowledge and development of Christian skills.

In common with group dynamics theory, Christian methods of teaching attempt to reduce the forces which prevent the class from making progress, and bring into greater prominence forces which will make a greater contribution to the learning process.³⁸ From the perspective of the Christian educator, this would imply that methods attempt to nullify the obstacles to the Word which are adherent to the learner's nature.

In no sense may Christian educational methods and techniques be said to be manipulative. Methods, in and of themselves, do not produce divinely acceptable change. Christian methods facilitate the action of the Word, which produces the radical change of conversion and sanctification of life. This is the point where Christian educational methods and group dynamics theory diverge. Group dynamics theory postulates that methods which facilitate a participative group structure will result in change which is advantageous to the growth of the learner and the group.³⁹ Christian education postulates that human action cannot engender faith. Only the Holy Spirit, by means of the Word, can effectively pro-

³⁸David H. Jenkins, "What Is Group Dynamics?," Group Development, in Selected Readings Series (Washington, D.C.: National Training Laboratories, 1961), I, 9.

³⁹Gibb, Platts and Miller, op. cit., p. 20.

duce conversion and sanctification of life.⁴⁰

Christian methods of teaching are not manipulative, but are vehicular. They attempt to provide a relatively clear channel through which the Holy Spirit applies the dynamic Word. Methods which the Christian instructor uses may be identical to many of the methods of the secular educator. However, the perspective from which these methods are applied is Christocentric. That is, these methods do not produce change, but facilitate change which is wrought by the Spirit. Within this context, the development of a participative group dynamic becomes a desirable method which facilitates the working of the Spirit. Dr. Warren H. Schmidt suggests,

The implications for Christian education seem quite clear to this writer. A central concern in every Bible class or confirmation class would be the development of a "climate" in which members could discuss some of their most meaningful personal experiences involving their beliefs, hopes, fears, values, and frustrations. This would require a feeling of trust and assurance that each person in the group had a basic acceptance of the others; in other words, that it was a "safe" group in which to reveal one's self. Statements and stories from the Scriptures would be introduced to shed light on these experiences and help to develop generalized concepts. Participation in the discussion would be essential and this participation would be much more than asking questions of clarification or giving "right" answers desired by a teacher. Rather, the discussion would be a process of inquiry, a common quest for deeper meanings and understandings.⁴¹

A participative class "climate" which is subsumed under the Christocentric principle, produces a methodology which is con-

⁴⁰BC, "The Small Catechism," p. 345.

⁴¹Warren H. Schmidt, "The Churchman and the Social Sciences," Toward Adult Christian Education, edited by Donald Deffner (River Forest: Lutheran Education Association, c.1962), XIX, 40.

ductive to the Spirit's implementation of the Word. However, the instructor should be aware of the fact that this is only a methodology, and not an end in itself.⁴² Participative action produces a congenial atmosphere, which may give the premature impression that the objectives of the class have been attained. It should be recognized that a functional group dynamic is not necessarily Christian. The objective is not that the learners get along well with each other, but that they become reconciled to God and thereby share in the communion of saints.

Physical Environment of the Class

If the early Christians could meet for worship in catacombs, it appears probable that environmental handicaps should not preclude adequate adult pre-membership instruction. At the same time, physical surroundings which are in accord with the objectives of the class will undoubtedly facilitate the learning process.

Elements which should be considered in the planned curriculum include: adequate lighting, space, chairs and tables; convenient drinking water, rest rooms; a fresh atmosphere; comfortable temperature; pleasant colors and decorations; accessible blackboard, projector and screen, pencils and paper, etc.

Tasteful religious symbolism used as decoration will help to direct learner attention to the class objectives, and may be

⁴² Herbert A. Thelen and Watson Dickerman, "Stereotypes and the Growth of Groups," Group Development, p. 77.

used as illustration in the course of the class experience.

If a participative dynamic is a method which will be used, the seating arrangement should be such that all of the learners can view each other, as well as the instructor. The most common arrangement is for the class to be seated in a circle around a large table, or in desk-chairs. The serving of refreshments at some time during the class can help to promote an informal atmosphere which is conducive to the participative method.

In general, every effort should be made toward the comfort of the class, to avoid distractions and to promote an atmosphere which is conducive to the implementation of the class objectives.

Outside Influences

There are many outside influences which will have a direct effect upon the learners. Only a few are listed as illustration. The attitudes of members of the congregation toward class members may be critical. If the learner feels that he is being "cold-shouldered" by members of the congregation, he may see little relevance between what is being taught in the class and the behavior of those who profess to be living by Christian standards. A warm and friendly hospitality will tend to support the learner in his new faith.⁴³

Additional factors which should be considered as an integral part of the curriculum are the attitudes of relatives, friends and

⁴³Repp, loc. cit.

neighbors. As the instructor become aware of the variety of outside influences upon the learner, he will bring to bear the support of the Church and the class. He may see that necessary facilities, for example, babysitters, are provided when possible from the congregation. He will understand that each learner has many pressures brought to bear upon his new faith, and will lend support.

Summary

The adult pre-membership curriculum involves the total environment of the learners. Every factor which will influence the learning process, no matter how indirectly, should be considered and evaluated in the light of the Christocentric principle. The curriculum is never an objective, but is the instrument by means of which the Holy Spirit applies the dynamic Word of God to the learner. The curriculum should provide adequate opportunity for the learner, moved by the Holy Spirit, to respond to God's work and will. This response takes the form of repentance and faith, which is concretely manifested in the development of Christian knowledge, skills and attitudes.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Learner

Adult pre-membership instruction serves the needs of persons who desire to become members of the local congregation. These learners will differ in perspectives to a large degree. Previous backgrounds will influence the reception of new concepts and ideas. With specific relation to the adult class, this means that no concept or statement can be assumed to be initially understood by the learner. Some learners may not be Christian, others may be lapsed Christians, and still others may be practicing Christians. There is no common theological denominator upon which instruction may rely, except for the fact that all are in need of repentance and faith, which is either initiated or sustained and developed by the action of the Holy Spirit, depending upon the spiritual condition of the learner.

If learning is to be effective, a point of contact must be found with the learner. This point of contact is usually a symptom of the learner's sinful nature, and not the sin itself. When "contact" is made with the learner, he is led to see the symptomatic nature of his felt needs. The Word directs him to an objectively valid perception of his sinful nature, and the ultimate need, forgiveness by God. In Christ, his sins are forgiven, and his perspective becomes re-oriented to conform to God's plan for him. That is, his perspective shifts from an

anthropocentric, selfish viewpoint, to a Christocentric perspective.

Principles

God wills to involve Himself in the salvation of man. Although man is alienated from God, unable to live according to His will, God has manifested His mercy and grace by providing the means of reconciliation, Jesus Christ, the Savior. God's dynamic Word, the Means of Grace, conveys God's pardon and renewal to all who trust in the Savior, to all who have been enabled to believe by the power of the Spirit.

Christians have been called into the community of the Church, wherein they minister the Word to one another, and to the world. This ministry exists on all levels of Christian life. It consists of the informal exhorting to life in the faith, physical comfort and aid, renewal through the Lord's Supper and the hearing and speaking of the proclaimed Word.

Christian education may be called a structured proclamation and application of the Word to the faith and life of the learner. It is the calling and recalling to faith. Christian education is a vehicle of the Holy Spirit, whereby He enables the learner to grow into his heritage as a child of God.

Adult pre-membership instruction is primarily directed toward the unconverted learner, and therefore has as its central purpose the calling to repentance and faith. This work of the Spirit results in the new life in Christ.

Objectives

The primary objective of adult pre-membership instruction is conversion, the calling to faith. This objective can be attained only by the action of the Word. Yet God chooses to convey His Word by means of His instruments, His people. Adult pre-membership instruction is therefore the channel whereby God conveys His creative, saving and sustaining Word to the minds and hearts of unbelievers, transforming them into new people in Christ Jesus.

The secondary objective of adult pre-membership instruction, progressive sanctification of life, can be implemented only when the primary objective has already taken place. That is, the learner cannot grow in faith until he has been "born again." In terms of learner response, adult pre-membership instruction aims toward a Spirit-generated response of faith. By means of the Word, it calls the unconverted to repentance and faith. It recalls the lapsed to their baptismal birth. The Word sustains, renews and fortifies practicing Christians in the Christocentric life. The objectives are stated in terms of learner response. But the enabling power to respond comes from God.

The Curriculum

Every factor which will exert an influence upon the learning process can properly be called a part of the curriculum. This means that, although the curriculum is planned, account must be taken of unplanned factors which impinge upon the learner and the

learning process.

The basic principle which guides the formation of the curriculum in the adult pre-membership class is that the entire curriculum functions in a Christocentric manner. That is, the objective of curriculum development is that every factor contributes toward the declaration and implementation of the kerygma.

The material for adult pre-membership instruction must be completely Christocentric in content. The purpose of each lesson, as well as that of the manual as a whole, should contain a complete declaration of the kerygma. When this principle is followed, the organizing principle of the manual and of the individual lessons is subordinate to the primary objective of adult pre-membership instruction, the call to faith.

The organizing principles of the manual and of the lessons may be formulated in terms of secondary objectives. That is, each lesson should present the full kerygma, call for the response of repentance and faith, and channel the learner to a life-response; all of which is implemented by the Spirit, working by means of the Word.

The instructor functions by the Christocentric principle. His ability and skill, the success of his teaching, does not depend upon himself, but upon the action of the Word.

While there may be a variety of viewpoints which members of the class exhibit, the group dynamic which is most conducive to the learning process is the dynamic which the Word creates, the Christocentric group.

Methods, physical environment and outside influences, when controllable, are to function according to the Christocentric principle. That is, the whole of the curriculum is subsumed under the action of God.

Conclusions

Adult pre-membership instruction, which looks for the inception of faith, is generically related to the quantitatively greater area of Christian education, which aims for the growth of faith. The power which enables learner response is the same in both cases, the Holy Spirit's working by means of the dynamic Word. It is God who redeems, creates saving faith, and sustains the Christian in the life of faith.

The qualitative difference between adult pre-membership instruction and other areas of Christian education is that, by means of the Word, it calls to faith; whereas most of Christian education calls for the response of a growing faith, within the context of a reciprocal faith.

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